

**AN ORAL HISTORY OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IN
AUSTRALIA**

Gregory Maurice Downes

B.Ec, MISM

Victoria University

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ABSTRACT

Women have been playing football (soccer) in Australia since the late nineteenth century. Over the past forty years the game has grown significantly with the national team achieving global recognition and the game becoming more widely accepted within the male-dominated football culture. According to FIFA there are an estimated 30 million women playing the game worldwide (FIFA Women's Football Survey 2014), with around 378, 000 playing in Australia (Roy Morgan Research 2015). Despite this long and compelling history, researchers have largely ignored the history of women's football in Australia, and the voices of women players remain unheard. The women's game is yet to be written into the history of the code.

My research project aims to address this shortage of knowledge by asking the question – 'What can the oral history of women who played and play the game of football contribute to the understandings of gender and football history in Australia?' The research uses oral history as a method of qualitative interview and is based on interviews with eighteen women and three men, some of whom have represented Australia, other players, administrators and referees. My methodological approach provides the participants with an opportunity to express, in their own words, their role in the history of the game.

My research findings support and challenge existing theories concerning the role of women participating in a male-dominated sport. Although supporting the well-documented theories, which highlight the battle against widespread gendered discrimination, for recognition, resources and support, the research provides a degree of divergence from some of the accepted narratives of women involved in a sport dominated by men.

The rise of the 'supportive male' – a departure from the normally held bias of masculine trivialisation – is paramount in the contributions of fathers, brothers, boyfriends, husbands and coaches. While the women faced significant hardships in their efforts to play the game, a genuine love and passion for the

game emerged as the overriding value expressed by the women involved. The research reveals the value of family and community as major cornerstones of support for the women and their continued efforts to play the game. The research also challenges theories concerning the complex relationships between women's identities as female footballers and notions of femininity and sexuality. While the women enjoy playing the game hard and competitively that they also bring their own meanings into playing the game, including being part of a team, making life-long friends and just having fun. The research provided an opportunity for them to recall their achievements and successes and highlighted the importance to them of recognising the pioneers of the game.

In answer to calls from historians to address the lack of attention paid to women and sport in Australia (Hay and Murray 2014), my research also provides a history of the women's game in Australia. The history is based on the oral testimony of the women and men involved in the game over the past forty years in Australia, and includes the use of published accounts and documentary evidence, all of which add to the international 'fund of social and historical knowledge about women's football' (Magee et al. 2007).

My research provides a much-needed academic emphasis on women's football and the role it has played in the history of the code in Australia. It provides a link between those who pioneered the game and those women and girls who enjoy the love of the game today.

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY STUDENT DECLARATION

I, **Gregory Maurice Downes**, declare that the PhD thesis entitled “An Oral History of Women’s Football in Australia” is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

This research was approved by Victoria University’s Human Research Ethics Committee (VUHREC), reference number HRETH 12/71.

Signature



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ABBREVIATIONS

AFC	Asian Football Confederation
ALFC	Asian Ladies Football Confederation
W-League	Australian semi professional women's soccer competition
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AFL	Australian Football League (Aussie Rules)
AIS	Australian Institute of Sport
ANU	Australian National University
ASF	Australian Soccer Federation
ASSH	Australian Society for Sport Historians
ASC	Australian Sports Commission
AWSA	Australian Women's Soccer Association
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DPR	Democratic People's Republic
FA	English Football Association
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FC	Football Club
FFNC	Football Far North Coast
FFA	Football Federation Australia
FFV	Football Federation Victoria
IOC	International Olympic Committee
JFA	Japan Football Association
MC	Master of Ceremonies
MLSA	Metropolitan Ladies' Soccer Association
NED	National Executive Director
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
NTC	National Training Centre
NSW	New South Wales Australia
OWFC	Oceania Women's Football Confederation
OHRO	Oral History Research Office
OAM	Order of Australia Medal

PNG	Papua New Guinea
QLD	Queensland Australia
ROCFA	Republic of China Football Association
RR	Richmond Rovers soccer club
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome – Viral Disease
SA	South Australia
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service
TAS	Tasmania, Australia
WWI	The First World War
WWII	The Second World War
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VUHREC	Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee
VSF	Victorian Soccer Federation
WA	Western Australia
WAWSA	Western Australia Women’s Soccer Association
WFC	Women’s Football Club
WNSL	Women’s National Soccer League
WSV	Women’s Soccer Victoria
WWC	Women’s World Cup

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

My research question is – What can the oral history of women who played and play the game of football (soccer) contribute to the understandings of gender and football history in Australia?

Women's football (soccer) in Australia has taken tremendous strides over the past 40 years. Participation rates have increased, the national team has achieved global recognition, and there is a growing sense that the code has a viable future in the crowded Australian sporting landscape (Hay 2006). However, despite its long and compelling history, researchers have largely ignored the history of women's football (association football or soccer) in Australia. The voices of the women who have played the game remain unheard, and the women's game has yet to be written into the history of the code.

Research aims

The purpose of my research is to contribute to knowledge in relation to the history of women's football in Australia and is based on the oral testimony of women (and men) involved in the game. My thesis will contribute to addressing the major gender imbalance in the study of Australian soccer by providing an opportunity for the women who pioneered the game of football in Australia to share their experiences. The research focuses on questions of gender equity, identity and experience in women's football history in Australia.

The aims of my research are:

- To examine the history of women's football in Australia through the use of an oral history methodology.
- To examine the life experiences of the women involved with football in Australia within the cultural context of the time in which they lived and played the game.

My thesis uses oral history as a method of qualitative interview that emphasises participant perspectives (Leavy 2011). My methodological approach provides the women participants with an opportunity to express, in their own words, their role in the history of the game. Traditional practices of history making often neglect the lives of marginalised people, including women.

The recording and analysis of oral accounts of the past, is an invaluable and compelling research method. Jennifer Hargreaves' (2001, p. 1) interviews with marginalised women who struggled against 'particularly harsh forms of discrimination' to partake in sport reveal the unique ability of oral histories to question informants and evoke recollections and understandings of individuals and groups largely hidden from documentary sources (Booth 2005, p. 468).

In order to examine the life experiences of the women (and some men) I developed both an empathetic and ethical relationship with the interviewees involved in the research. It was important to conduct the interviews in an environment in which the women (and men) felt comfortable and valued, and that a rapport developed between my self as researcher and the individual participant. It was important that I also explained my involvement in women's football to each interviewee and my interest in developing an oral history of the women's game in Australia.

By sharing their experiences these women (and men) are contributing to the paucity of knowledge about women's football in Australia and adding social context to the chronological events in the history of the game.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into three parts. Part one of the thesis introduces the research project, and presents the literature review and methodology. The second part provides a history of the women's game in Australia, and part three presents the findings of this research, and discusses the interpretation of the themes that emerge from the interviews with the women and men

involved in the game. Part one includes chapters one, two and three. In this chapter I introduce the research project, the structure of the thesis and the aims of the study. Chapter one also includes a personal background to the study. I describe how I became involved with women's sport (football in particular) through my youngest daughter and how my academic journey began.

Chapter two is the literature review in relation to the subject of women's football. I describe the lack of research attention given to women's sport in general and women's football in particular within Australia. In contrast I describe the increasing research attention that other footballing nations are giving to the history of women's football and experiences of women who are involved in the game. Other topics discussed in this chapter include football and feminism and the role that sports feminism has played in the increase in research into the history of women and football; the growing emphasis in research being placed on women's experiences within the game of football; and the increasing use of qualitative methodologies to undertake the work. Included in this chapter is a discussion on the use of oral history and women's football. I argue that while there are limited examples of this type of methodology being used in the study of women's football in Australia, that there has been an increasing number of examples of how and where it has been used internationally. While researchers have been reticent to undertake study in relation to women and football in Australia, this is not the case when we look at the other codes. There are a number of examples of research into women and the Australian Football League (AFL), women and rugby league and rugby union.

Chapter two concludes with a review of the literature dedicated to women in Australian sport history. Although there has been little attention paid by researchers to women's sport in general within Australia, a review is included of those publications that have attempted to rectify the situation since the early 1990s. I discuss the emergence of sport history research in the 1990s and the pioneering publications on Australian sport history, *Sport in Australia: A Social History* by Vamplew and Stoddart in 1994, *Paradise Lost: The Rise*

of Organised Sport in Australia by Richard Cashman in 1995 and *Sport in Australian History* by Adair and Vamplew published in 1997. Each publication is reviewed in relation to the amount of attention given to women and sport. While the publications highlight the struggles women have faced in order to play sport, and agree that there is much to do in relation to recognising the role of women in Australian sport history, little has been done to rectify this situation. There is scant mention of women's football in any of the publications reviewed.

Chapter three discusses my underlying philosophical approach to the research, by outlining the epistemological assumptions, theoretical perspective and methodology, which support and provide context to this work. I describe the use of oral history as one of many qualitative research methodologies, its definition, development and its criticisms. I discuss the impact of the social history movement on oral history and the role oral history has played in both women's history and sport history. The remainder of the chapter is dedicated to a description of the oral history research project and why I chose to use this type of research methodology. I describe in detail the data-gathering phase, including the selection of participants and the interview process itself. I discuss the relevant scholarly advice in relation to how interviews should be constructed and undertaken and describe my approach to the project. In particular I discuss how each of the interviewees was contacted, times and venues selected and the process taken in interviewing each of them in turn. A discussion of the transcription process is included along with the ethical considerations I was required to address. The chapter concludes with a description of the data analysis and interpretation stages of the project. Reference is made to my use of the computer program Nvivo and how it aided my analysis of the interview transcripts.

Chapter four of the thesis tells the story of the history of the women's game in Australia from the late-nineteenth century through to the present time. It is based on the oral testimony of the women and men who were involved in the establishment, growth and development of the game over the past forty years, as well as published accounts and documentary evidence. The chapter

discusses the growth of the game, the development of the national competition, Australia's involvement in international competition, the Women's World Cup, Olympic Games, and the future of the game in Australia. Importantly, it places the women and men interviewees into the context of the history of the code. The chapter provides a lead-in to the discussion of the emerging themes that characterise the experiences of the women and men who contributed to this research, and the narrative of football history in Australia.

In the third part of the thesis I discuss the interpretation of the themes that emerged from the interviews with the women and men involved with the research project. This part is divided into chapters (five through to nine). In chapter five, prior to the discussion of the emerging themes I introduce the women and men involved in the research and provide a brief biography of their involvement in the game. The chapter then goes on to discuss the women's love of the game, which is a powerful and central theme that emerges from the women's experiences in football. It begins with how the women became involved in football, and the role of family and community in assisting them to play the game. The chapter introduces the notion of the 'supporting male' in the lives of the women and the influence that a father, brother or boyfriend had on their introduction to the game, and their ability to continue playing. The overriding theme is the joy of playing the game and the love that each of the women have for the game itself.

Chapter six examines the women's struggle for recognition and acknowledgement. While women and girls' football in Australia has recently achieved a level of acknowledgement and respect within the national football culture, the efforts of the individuals involved were not always taken seriously and their roles were often trivialised. The chapter addresses the women's battle for respect as players and why many feel strongly about the importance of recognising the pioneers of the game. I describe how they gained respect through demonstrating great skill, and many are pleased with the introduction of the semi-professional W-League as a positive sign in the recognition of the women's game, although some still see the current structure of the

competition as a lack of respect due to it not being a true and equal competition. The chapter describes the importance of the women's individual successes in the game, playing for your state and country and being rewarded.

In chapter seven I discuss the many hardships faced by the women participating in the game and why the many successes and achievements have been hard earned. The chapter addresses the many types of discrimination faced by the women, including sexual discrimination, marginalisation, sexual stereotyping and a lack of respect from the wider community and those who ran the game. Many of the women interviewed had a great desire to be treated equally and feel cheated. The chapter explores in detail the struggles faced by these women when faced with club-level discrimination which often led to them being treated like second class citizens – with little or no resources and having to pay their own way. A level of discrimination is still prevalent today, often displayed in the male dominated sphere of coaching, the lack of media attention, the role of politics, the superficiality of support, and life choices the women have to make if they wish to remain and succeed in the game.

In chapter eight I describe what the game has meant to the women involved. While enjoying a love and passion for the game, the physicality and competitiveness of the contest, the women are at the same time redefining their sporting experiences. They are developing values that are more closely associated with enjoyment and social involvement, such as, connectedness, sharing and supporting each other. I argue that these values of the women's game are distinctive, with a recognition of the higher value placed on friendship, having fun, teamwork and how these aspects have helped them at work and in their lives. The women comment on how important it is to reflect on the past and what the game has meant to them. How giving back to the game is important to some and what value a lifetime of achievement and commitment brings to their work and personal development.

The final chapter presents the conclusions of the research project.

Personal background to the study

I have never thought of myself as a pro-feminist, or a male supporter of women's rights. I had never fully understood the theory behind the word feminist apart from what the media provided during the 1970s in relation to the women's liberation movement, the burning of bras and *The Female Eunuch* by Germaine Greer. However my ignorance in relation to the central concern of the feminist movement – gender inequality – soon changed when I became the father of two girls. Being involved in their education and sporting development led to a gradual awakening of my consciousness in relation to the way they were being unequally treated due to their gender.

My development as a male supporter of feminism began later in my sporting life. Sport in my youth consisted mainly of rugby league, swimming, and surfing, although I did enjoy a few seasons of soccer with the Earlwood Wanderers back in the 1960s in Sydney. I am a white-Australian male, born in 1955, who enjoyed the privileges of a carefree middle-class upbringing in a stable family of seven (five children). Sport was a major part of the family life with rugby league for the boys and netball for the girls, until surfing overtook all others and became my lifestyle choice for many years.

It was not until I was married and had children that I returned to study for the first time since dropping out of full time University in the 1970s. I was studying Financial Management, which was clearly not for me. I re-entered postgraduate study after completing an undergraduate degree in Economics (1988) by way of a Masters in International Sport Management (1998). By this stage my children were growing up and were significantly involved with sport- swimming, surf club, netball and what was to become a major part of my life as a supporting parent – women's soccer. My youngest daughter Caitlin began playing soccer at the age of eleven, when I was in my mid 40s.

It was a result of my involvement with the game at the grass roots level that I first began to notice that things were different for the girls in relation to the boys. Although they all played for the same club, the girls were clearly treated as if they were put up with rather than welcomed. There were many examples

of this difference, but most were clearly evident in the second-hand playing shirts, limited and restrictive training spaces, difficult game schedules and times, lack of club support and resources. I was involved in many roles over the years my daughter played club, school and regional representative soccer. I have been both club- and representative-team manager, club treasurer, regional-committee member, supporter and general dogsbody. During these many years, it was not uncommon to hear comments such as 'The girls are too much trouble.' 'They whine all the time,' and, 'They have to get out there and find their own sponsorship.' It was often left up to the parents to provide much-needed playing shorts, socks and other game resources, while the boys received the major focus and support. Another experience my daughter shared with me recently involved her time with the school representative all-girls team, which had remained unbeaten for three years in the state high school championships – an achievement yet to be surpassed or equaled. A new sports teacher had been appointed and the team was to be presented to the school in recognition of their achievements. The teacher said to the girls, 'must have been an easy competition if you girls won it three years in a row! compared with what the boys had to compete in.' To this day my daughter still remarks on the huge disappointment they all felt.

My Masters degree provided me with an opportunity to include the many examples of difference and indifference into my research and subject requirements. Topics such as sport and the law, marketing and public relations and sport management started to open up my eyes in relation to the lack of research into women and sport. As a parent I had been involved for many years in the fight to make my daughter's involvement in soccer an inclusive one. I started to become more aware of the issues on a much broader scale. This awareness and the lack of attention to the issues surrounding women and sport (soccer in particular) led me to research *The Future of Women's Football in the Asian Football Confederation (AFC)* as the research component of my masters degree in 2007. The research consisted of a survey, which was distributed to the 46 member nations of the AFC. Several questions were asked in relation to the role of women in football. Prior to the survey being distributed approval from both the AFC and Football

Federation Australia (FFA) was required. During this process, then president of the AFC Mohammed bin Hamman questioned my role in the process at a meeting where the survey was to be approved, by reportedly asking 'Why would a man would be interested in researching women's football?' This reaction further entrenched the findings of my research to that point. The women's game was subject to widespread discrimination and the women involved marginalised by the power of the men who controlled the game.

While my daughter was coming to the end of her playing career, I had only just begun my journey into the world of women's sport and its many injustices. It became clear during my initial ventures into the postgraduate world of women's sport that there didn't seem to be much interest in recording, analysing or researching the subject. This was particularly evident when I started to research the role of women and sport in Australia, and even more evident in relation to women and soccer. While I could locate some literature in relation to women's sport and soccer from other competing nations, there was very little available in relation to Australia. At first I thought that it must have been my lack of experience in research. Maybe I was looking in all of the wrong places? My first reaction was, 'There must be something out there!' How wrong could I be?

I soon came to realise that the world of women's sport was of little interest to most. I would often ask the question 'Who cares?' Most of the time the answer was 'No one!' This situation provided me with an opportunity to do something about it. Somebody had to start somewhere. It was at this time that I began my search for an opportunity to undertake research into women's soccer, which would add something of value to the sport and would acknowledge the women who had played and still play the game. It was clear that the role of women's soccer had not been recognised in the history of women's sport in Australia, and it was from this point that I became interested in trying to address a glaring gap in the knowledge of the women's game.

I was accepted into my Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) course with Victoria University on 18 August 2011.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Prominent football (soccer) historian Roy Hay argued in 2006 that women's football in Australia is at least as popular as any of the other codes of football. Hay highlighted the national team's successes in qualifying for World Cup and Olympic tournaments, and stated 'Women's soccer is claimed to be the fastest growing sport in the country' (Hay 2006, p2). The success of the women's national team grew even further with the inclusion of Australia in the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) in 2006, with the code's first major international success occurring with the winning of the Asian Cup in 2010.

Federation Internationale de Football Association's (FIFA) Women's Football Survey of 2014 estimates that there are some 30 million women playing the game worldwide. A recent review undertaken by Australian market research company Roy Morgan Research indicates that around 378,000 female and female youth (under 18) are playing the game in Australia (Roy Morgan Research 2015).

Historical references indicate that women have played the game of soccer both recreationally and competitively around the world since the nineteenth century, 'with some evidence that they experimented in Australia with the game before the First World War' (Hay and Murray 2014, p.267). Hay and Murray provide references to the game's early development in the 1900s through to the depression in 1929 with a growth in activity and participation in the inter-war years. After the conclusion of the Second World War the game entered a period of revival and by the 1960s women's teams were being formed in increasing numbers across the country (Hay and Murray 2014). The game continued to grow with the formation of a national competition in 1974, developing into a national league by 1996. Today the women's game is played at the elite level in the W-League, which began in 2008.

Regardless of this long history, researchers have largely ignored the development of women's football in Australia, and the voices of the women

who play the game remain largely undocumented. This lack of attention became a concern of some of the more noted Australian sport historians in recent times, and there have been some calls for this situation to be addressed. Murray and Hay (2006), editors of *The World Game Downunder*, argue that while the women's game in this country has a long and more interesting history than most realise, there has been no comprehensive treatment of women's soccer in Australia.

My initial search for literature in relation to the history of women's football in Australia was very disappointing. There is very little documented information available. The most significant references to the history of women's football in Australia are to be found in Elaine Watson's account of the origins and early years of the Australian Women's Soccer Association (AWSA), published in 1994, *Australian Women's Soccer: The First 20 Years*, and in *Women's Soccer in Queensland 'In A League of its Own'* celebrating the twentieth State Championship published in 1997. Both of these publications provide a personal account of Watson's experiences in the development of the women's game since the early twentieth century. Watson was 35 years old when she was first introduced to the game in 1970. They provide valuable information, team and game records, photos and personal accounts of the growth of women's soccer in Australia, including the establishment of structured State Championships, the first international team and achievements of the code over those years. This work clearly exemplifies Watson's enormous contribution to the development of the women's game in this country.

Richard Kreider's book published in 2010, *Paddocks to Pitches: A comprehensive History of Western Australian Football*, contains a chapter on women's football titled 'The Women's Game 1902-2012'. This work provides historical information about the development of the women's game in Western Australia, which Kreider states, began in an organised sense in 1972.

British historian Jean Williams added to the documentation of this history in her book, *A Beautiful Game: International Perspectives on Women's Football* published in 2007. It contains a chapter dedicated to women's football in

Australia, titled 'Waltzing the Matildas'. It provides a brief overview of the history of the women's national team and it represents a rare academic perspective on the history of the women's game in Australia. Williams highlights the hardships faced by the women's game in its early developmental years through to the Sydney Olympics in 2000 and the restructure of the game as a result of the Crawford Report (See Chapter four). Despite the hardships faced by the code, Williams describes the code's many team and individual successes within a national sporting culture dominated by cricket and the rugby codes and a national hegemonic exclusion of association football.

'The Women's Game' a chapter by Hay and Murray (2014) in their recent book, *A History of Football In Australia: A Game of Two Halves*, provides the most comprehensive history of the women's game in Australia to date. The chapter provides references to the game's beginnings in Australia. It situates the game in a global context and follows its development State-by-State through to the establishment of the national championship and competition on the world stage. The chapter begins with women's football within the global context and then concentrates on the game's beginnings in Australia. Some of their references suggest that women's football may have begun as early as the 1880s. A detailed description of the growth of the women's game is then provided throughout the 1900s, the inter-war years and the period from the 1940s to the early 1970s. The development of the women's national team and its many successes is also addressed. The introduction and conclusion to the chapter emphasise that the story of the 'women who played, coached, administered and supported football remains largely untold' (Hay and Murray 2014, p.266), and that 'research on the broader social role of women within this male-dominated sport remains in its infancy' (Hay and Murray 2014, p.281).

Hay had previously provided a short introduction to the growth of the women's game in, 'Our wicked foreign game: why has association football (Soccer) not become the main code of football in Australia?' under the heading *Other Possibilities*, published in 2006. Hay provides a brief acknowledgement of the

growth of the women's game both domestically and internationally. He highlights:

There are still a number of barriers to equal treatment in the sport, including shortage of facilities, lack of qualified coaches, very limited media coverage and promotion of female role models, continuing prejudice against women playing soccer and the expectations of women regarding sporting activity. (Hay 2006, p.21)

In 2011 John Maynard published, *The Aboriginal Soccer Tribe*, which includes a chapter, dedicated to the 'Aboriginal Matildas – The World Game and Indigenous Women'. This chapter provides a brief overview of the history of Indigenous women and football in Australia by concentrating on the individual contributions of a number of players. Aboriginal women's involvement in the game first occurred during the 1970s and has resulted in several inductees into the Aboriginal and Islander Sports Hall of Fame and a growing number of women playing at the elite level. It is an important contribution to the literature because it acknowledges the contributions of the many Indigenous women who contributed to the success and growth of the women's game in Australia, and is enhanced greatly by excerpts from interviews done with Indigenous women soccer players. While acknowledging the success stories, Maynard states that there is still much to learn about the important role the game can play in the lives of Indigenous women soccer players.

Nevertheless, soccer as a game for Indigenous women, despite some obvious success stories, is still in its infancy. At the grassroots and wider community level, not enough is known about the success and opportunities for Aboriginal women in the game. Soccer has a great opportunity to play a key role in encouraging Aboriginal women to succeed on and off the field. (Maynard 2011, p.140)

There are other references to women's football to be found in more generalised sport history research such as Marion Stell's (1991) *Half the Race: A History of Australian Women in Sport*. Stell includes women's soccer in her discussion of the medical and social hurdles faced by women, the

discrimination of indigenous women athletes and the impact of feminism on women's sport. A chapter on the 'Impact of Feminism 1970-1990' argues that soccer for women began in Australia in the late 1960s and received its biggest boost with the introduction of the sport for schoolgirls in 1974. Stell states that an estimated 60,000 women kicked off the 1978 season. More recently Stell published, *Girls in Sport: Soccer* (2004), which reflects on the history and tradition of the women's game in Australia with profiles of leading players. There is also a reference to the women's game in a chapter on Australia as an emerging football nation by Arthur and Downes in Sean Hamil and Simon Chadwick's (2010) *Managing Football: An International Perspective*.

The above references indicate that the academic attention paid to the history of women's football in Australia is slight. However an increasing amount of research into the women's game has occurred in a global context. While researching the history of women and the game in Asia for my Masters Degree I was able to develop a sound sense of the history of the game in China, Japan, Korea and other Asian footballing nations based on the amount and quality of research undertaken by historians such as Hong and Mangan (2004), Manzenreiter and Horne (2004), Majumdar and Bandyopadhyay (2006) and Williams (2007).

My literature review uncovered a range of research into the history of the women's game in other footballing nations like the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Europe, Africa, South America and New Zealand. They include; (Newsham 1994; Lopez 1997; Marschik 1998; Pfister et al. 1998; Scraton et al. 1999; Pfister 2001; Markovits & Hellerman 2003; Williams 2003; Bourke 2004; Fasting 2004; Pfister 2004; Brus & Trangbaek 2004; Hall 2004; Votre & Mourao 2004; Hong & Mangan 2004; Koh 2004; Majumdar 2004; Manzenreiter & Horne 2004; Saavedra 2004; Macbeth 2007; Magee et al. 2007; Williams 2007; Lisi 2010; Markovits & Rensmann 2010; Pelak 2010; Elsey 2011; Williams & Chawansky 2014).

As the above list of references suggests, the vast majority of research into the history of women's football has occurred over the past ten to fifteen years.

The research comprises, in the main, chronological histories of the women's game in each nation. The literature includes histories associated with the United States, Canada, England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Spain, Brazil, Chile, China, Korea, Japan, India, Senegal, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa and New Zealand. The individual studies provide a rare insight into myriad cultures, economies, political climates and social factors that have impacted upon the development of the women's game worldwide. Jen Doyle's weblog 'From a Left Wing' (2013) includes several international stories on gender and women's football including Brazil, South Africa and France. The research identifies the inherent gender traditions of each nation and the challenges and problems women have faced in their struggle for equal rights in a male-dominated world. The individual-nation case studies, 'add to the fund of social and historical knowledge about women's football' (Magee et al. 2007, p.xiv). Australia has yet to be added to this list of footballing nations.

Edoardo Rosso (2007) comments further on the absence of literature in the publication, *Changes in the ethnic identification of women's soccer clubs in Adelaide: the case of Adelaide City Women's Football Club*:

Australian women's soccer is not included in the special issue on women's soccer of *Soccer and Society* (2003, vol. 4, no. 2-3) that critically discusses the history of the game across 16 countries, including USA, Canada, China, Korea, India, Denmark, England, Germany, Norway, Ireland, Sweden, New Zealand, Senegal, Nigeria, South Africa and Brazil, nor is it examined elsewhere. (Rosso 2007, p.71)

The literature as a whole provides an analysis of the growth of the women's game from the late nineteenth century through to the contemporary period, and portrays the widely gendered nature of the many obstacles to the development of the women's game throughout its long history.

A prominent theme emerging from international histories of women's football is that, in spite of differing social and cultural contexts in which the game has developed across different societies, it has generally been marginalized and treated as subordinate in relation to dominant sports cultures. (Macbeth 2007, p.3)

Jessica Macbeth in her 'Women's football in Scotland: An Historical Overview' states that women's football in Scotland is notable only by its relative absence from research (Macbeth 2007). Macbeth's statement about the lack of research on the women's game in Scotland parallels the lack of attention paid in Australia.

The small amount of research into the women's game in Australia is chronological and based on the more traditional methodologies of historiography associated with written documentation. International researchers are beginning to acknowledge the importance of women's experiences and 'are seeking to understand and learn more about women's complex relationship with football' (Magee et al. 2007, p.xxi). In order to 'move beyond the confines of statistical surveys on participation rates to a deeper understanding of the material, lived experiences of playing and watching football,' researchers are using qualitative approaches such as oral history and interviewing to better explore these concepts and their value to the historiography of the game.

Women's football and oral history

There are very few examples of qualitative research methodologies used in the study of Australian women's sport history and only one reference found in relation to women's football. This is evident in the work undertaken by John Maynard in the book, *The Aboriginal Soccer Tribe* (2011) described above. This work is based partly on interviews done with Indigenous women soccer players for the chapter titled 'The Aboriginal Matildas – The World Game and Indigenous Women'.

An example of non-Australian research based on qualitative methods can be found in Scraton, Fasting, Pfister and Bunuel's (1999) publication, 'It's Still a

Man's Game? The Experiences of Top-Level European Footballers', where forty in-depth, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with successful women footballers on their experiences and the meaning of sport in their lives. From New Zealand, the work of Barbara Cox and Shona Thompson (2001), 'Facing the Bogey: Women, Football and Sexuality' centres its research on interviewing women footballers from a premier-level women's football team in New Zealand on the extent to which homophobia is associated with women's experiences of football. Barbara Cox's (2010) PhD Thesis titled, *Issues of Power in a History of Women's Football in New Zealand: A Foucauldian Genealogy*, uses fifteen in-depth interviews with a cross-section of women involved with the game. Jayne Caudwell uses fourteen in-depth semi-structured interviews with women aged between twenty-one and forty-two in her (2002) research, 'Women's Experiences of Sexuality Within Football Contexts: A Particular and Located Footballing Epistemology'. Jean Williams in her 2003 publication, *A Game for Rough Girls? The History of Women's Football in Britain* incorporates the oral testimony of women footballers. The book includes two chapters dedicated to 'Memory and English Women's football' and 'Oral History and women's football in England'. Oral history interviews and women's football are combined in Magee, Caudwell, Liston and Scraton (eds.), *Women, Football and Europe* (2007). A section of the book is dedicated to women's experiences in football, addressing a number of issues including female perception, barriers to entering and participating in football and how football is taught and supported in Spain. More recently, Jean Williams in her (2013) publication, *Globalising Women's Football: Europe, Migration and Professionalisation* and Sine Agergaard and Nina Clara Tiesler (eds.) of, *Women, Soccer and Transnational Migration* (2014) use case studies based on oral histories of prominent women involved in football to illustrate how women footballers are increasingly being drawn to professional leagues. All of these publications provide an opportunity for those women who have and are associated with the game to share their experiences.

The earlier work undertaken by Gail Newsham leading to the publication of her book, *In a League of their own! Dick, Kerr Ladies Football Club 1917–*

1965 in 1994 is a leading example of the use of oral history in the historiography of women's football. The book is a socio-historical account of a remarkable women's football team who began playing in England in 1917 primarily to raise funds for various charitable organisations during the war. The book is based on the oral recordings of interviews undertaken with former players of the famous football club.

Fortunately I had taped-recorded my interviews with her, as I had done with all the ladies I met – so I have managed to save all their memories for posterity.

(Newsham 1994, p.xiv)

Although the club enjoyed many years of success and contributed greatly to the war effort, attracting crowds of up to 27,000, they eventually earned the wrath of the Football Association in England, which responded in 1921 by banning them from playing on FA club grounds. The Association stated, 'the game of football is quite unsuitable for females and ought not be to be encouraged' (Newsham, 1994, p. 49). While this did not put an end to the club, the decision effectively prevented the growth and development of the women's game in the United Kingdom for years to come.

Newsham's book introduced me to the world of women's soccer history based on the experiences and stories shared by the women involved and how this narrative could provide a valuable contribution to the history of the women's game. *In a League of their own!* demonstrated to me the value of oral history as a methodology of research and what the method could bring to the field of sport history. This research provided the women who played the game an opportunity to tell their stories and share their experiences. In doing so it helped to fill a gap in the knowledge associated with the history of the game itself, plus an opportunity to view society through a different lens.

I was particularly drawn to the individual experiences of the women involved with the Club over its long history, and was moved by the author's reflection – 'I soon came to realise that there had been nothing officially written down about these wonderful ladies and that, if something were not done soon, their

story would be lost forever.’ (Newsham 1994, xiii) The book contributed a rare insight into the study of women in sport history by recognising and acknowledging the roles these women played in the development of women’s football.

While there were no examples of the use of oral history in researching women’s football history in Australia, British historian Jean Williams (2007) in her chapter on ‘Waltzing the Matildas’ states that an understanding of the successes of the women’s national team in Australia may be better understood with the use of oral history. Williams states that these successes might have more to do with a wider national and cultural significance than improvements in and the stabilisation of football bureaucracy.

Life history accounts of the Sues, Janes, Leonies, Trixies, Bettys and Theresas would help to understand the whys and hows of the networks in women’s sport, youth leagues, recreational, rural and urban participation and so forth. (Williams 2007, p.166)

The voices of women in Australian sport history have been recognised by the Australian Women’s Archive project undertaken by Dr Nikki Henningham. The National Library of Australia holds several archived interviews with prominent Australian sports men and women within the sport oral history project. These include Australian women such as Betty Wilson, Faith Thomas and Ann Mitchell (Cricket), Heather McKay (Squash) and Wendy Turnbull (Tennis). In addition, there are a number of fine Australian examples of oral history projects, which do not involve sport. These include Wendy Lowenstein’s book, *Weevils in the Flour: An oral record of the 1930s depression in Australia* (1978), and with Tom Hills, *Under the Hook: Melbourne waterside workers remember working lives and class war, 1900–1980* published in 1982.

There are a number of examples of oral history and its use in the research of other footballing codes within Australia. Nikki Wedgwood in her 2005 publication, ‘Doin’It for Themselves! A Case Study of the Development of a Women’s Australian Rules Football Competition’ includes interviews with eight

current and former committee members and players. In the same publication Wedgwood provides her reasons for using oral history as a preferred methodology: in order to go beyond the mere facts and dates of the association of men's and women's football and tease out the broader social dynamics of the relationship.

To give voice to the non-hegemonic so that others hear what is being said by those who have always been articulate, but not usually attended to, to gain an insight into not just what these pioneering women footballers did but also what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, what they now think they did. (Wedgwood 2005, p.399)

Adam Muyt adopted a similar methodology in his oral history research on the Fitzroy Football club in, *Maroon & Blue: Recollections and Tales of the Fitzroy Football Club*, published in 2006. The book consists of edited extracts of taped interviews conducted over the years from 2003 through to 2005.

Roy Hay published the 'Use and Abuse of Oral Evidence' in 1986 in which the methodology of oral history is again reviewed for all of its virtues and potential shortcomings. This publication highlights the uniqueness of the methodology and provides examples of its use in a number of social and cultural settings including sport. The virtues and shortcomings of oral history are discussed in greater detail in the methodology chapter of this research. *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson in 1998 is an international anthology of key writings about the theory, method and use of oral history. It is an influential text in relation to my research project and oral history in general. This collection of important works includes Paul Thompson's, 'The voice of the past: oral history', Alessandro Portelli's 'What makes oral history different' and the work undertaken by Luisa Passerini, 'Work ideology and consensus under Italian fascism'. The collection covers critical aspects of oral history from its historical beginnings, through its differences and theoretical problems. It discusses interviewing and the interpretation of memories and of the future of oral history as a historical methodology.

Susan Cahn in her publication, 'Sports talk: oral history and its uses, problems, and possibilities for sport history' (1994), sums the method up well with the following words:

In studying gender, class, race or ethnicity (and their interconnections), oral history can be an excellent method for research on traditionally disempowered groups whose voices and perspectives show up least in written records. (Cahn 1994, p.5)

Women's football and feminism

Sport feminism centers on the 'efforts of practicing sportswomen to unmask discrimination and to equalize opportunities with men'. (Hargreaves 1994, p.25)

The establishment of sports feminism as a legitimate critical lens through which to investigate the many different cultures and practices within sport (Caudwell 2012), has accompanied a corresponding increase in research into the history of women and football. Many noted academics have begun to use qualitative methods in conducting research in footballing nations around the world. These include; (for example, Newsham 1994, Pfister et al. 1998, Scraton et al. 1999, Caudwell 2002, Williams 2003, Magee et al. 2007, Cox 2010, Vertinsky 2010). This cross-section of research considers the study of women and football within the concepts of sexuality, race, ethnicity and gender.

Since the mid 1990s, authors have highlighted the complexities of gender and gender relations and the impact on girls' and women's relationship to the 'people's game'. The burgeoning literature tends to adopt a feminist theoretical approach and successfully exposes the significance of football in the everyday lives of women. (Caudwell 2006, p.423)

As a leading researcher in this area, Jayne Caudwell has published several research papers dealing with the role of feminism in the study of women's sexuality, race, ethnicity and gender within a football context (Caudwell 1999, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2011, 2012). Caudwell argues that Sport Feminism(s) is

now a clearly established subject field within critical sport studies. Within feminist frameworks of analysis there is a growing emphasis being placed on the examination of women's experiences within the game of football. This is particularly evident in Caudwell's 'Women's Experiences of Sexuality Within Football Contexts: A Particular and Located Footballing Epistemology' (2002), which explores women's experiences within football contexts in England and Wales. The research used a qualitative approach (470 completed postal questionnaires and fourteen in-depth semi-structured interviews with women aged between twenty-one and forty-two) to explore women's experiences of sexuality within the game. The article positions the dominant cultural and social analysis of football in sports literature as male, one which has largely ignored women's involvement and experiences of playing. The research is informed by feminist theory and focuses on women's experiences within a football context. Based on the oral and written testimony of the women footballers, the article discusses sexual stereotyping, lesbianism, sexual disclosure and the notions of heterosexual dominance and the shifting nature of sexual relations.

Feminism and football is further explored in Caudwell's 'Gender, Feminism and Football Studies' (2011). This publication looks at the history of feminist theoretical development and feminist analyses. It explores how feminist theory can be used for future research and study of football and its many cultures (Caudwell 2011). Caudwell continues to espouse the use of feminism in 'Reviewing UK football cultures: continuing with gender analyses' (2011), which states that feminism offers a range of approaches and that there are many ways to explain the relationship between women and girls and football (Caudwell 2011). The recently published 'Women's Football in the UK: continuing with gender analyses' (2012) edited by Caudwell, provides examples of emerging research including women and football coaching education, volunteering, ethnicity, girlhood gender identity, sexuality and football and women with learning disabilities.

Another fine example of research and women's football experiences can be found in the recent work by Magee, Caudwell, Liston and Scraton (eds.) in the

2007 publication, *Women, Football and Europe: Histories, Equity and Experiences*, in which a number of qualitative research methodologies were used in the study of women's experiences in football. The book covers a variety of topics and includes research in women's football history, ethnicities and personal experiences. In the area of experiences the research begins to look more closely at women's complex relationship with football. As more women and girls get involved with the game it has become increasingly important to find out more about how they experience the game (Magee et al. 2007).

This work was preceded by similar research in Scraton and Flintoff (eds.) *Gender and Sport: A Reader* (2002). This publication addresses a cross-section of issues relating to women and sport in general. It includes (a chapter on) the contribution of feminist thought to the understanding of gender (and sport), and a chapter on women's football history in England, France, Norway, Scotland and Spain.

In these chapters, 'race', ethnicity and sexuality are linked to gender relations and, as a result, are shown to be strong influences on active involvement in the game. In other words, racism and homophobia as well as sexism (and misogyny) in football contexts are exposed as exclusionary for women players. (Caudwell 2011, p. 333)

The research adopts qualitative methodologies with the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews, focus groups and case studies.

Caudwell (2012) states in her conclusion that,

Further work is still required, work that considers gender relations beyond the player herself; she is important, but so too are the many women who are involved in the organization of the game. These women face structures that are challenging, resistant and oppressive, and cultures that affirm and reaffirm male dominance. (Caudwell 2012, p.328)

Williams's research on women's football in Australia (2007) argues that the literature on women and sport, particularly the feminist analyses of sport is only a recent occurrence. Williams adds that it was not until after the 2000 Sydney Olympics that literature emerged which questioned whether all Australians had been allowed to participate in, and to shape, the nation's sporting past and present.

Indigenous populations, including Aborigines, women and ethnic populations have consistently been identified as excluded and marginalised in the cultural and social aspects of Australia's heritage. (Williams 2007, p.162)

Research undertaken by Rob Hess (1996, 2000, 2004, 2005) on women and Australian Rules football has added greatly to the analysis of the many roles that women have played in the history of the sport in Australia. Researchers Messner & Sabo (1990) highlight the importance of gender in the analysis of both the historical and contemporary meaning of sport. They argue that in order to fully understand the meaning of sport in people's lives that gender must be used as a category of analysis.

No major research has taken a feminist approach to women's football in Australia, nor into the value of women's experiences in the game and how they may influence the role that women play in society.

Women's football history – other codes

While researchers have been reticent to investigate women's involvement in football in Australia, this is not the case when we look at the other codes. This is particularly so in relation to Australian Rules Football which has addressed the role of women and the sport in several publications, particularly by Nikki Wedgwood and Rob Hess (Hess 1996, 2000, 2004, 2005 Wedgwood 2004, 2005, 2008 and Burke 2005). Topics include the historical importance of women as sports fans, their contribution as supporters of Australian Rules Football, the development of a women's competition, historical accounts of women playing Australian Rules football and the role of women in the developing culture of the sport. Women involved with Australian Rules

Football during the First World War was addressed in Peter Burke's 'Patriot Games: Women's Football during the First World War in Australia', published in 2005.

Rugby League is represented in Charles Little's, 'What a freak-show they made! Women's Rugby League in 1920s Sydney', published in 2001. It examines the staging of a rugby league match by a group of women in 1921 and the place of women in sport and rugby league at that time. Alison Carle and John Nauright also address Rugby Union in 'A Man's Game? Women Playing Rugby Union in Australia' published in 1999, which examines women's rugby culture through an analysis of an Australian rugby club and the culture that surrounds the women's team. This study was undertaken in order to understand why women are involved in a male-dominated sport while at the same time experiencing strong opposition based on historical, social and physical perceptions (Carle and Nauright 1999).

Women in Australian sport history

The lack of academic attention is not restricted to women's football in Australia alone, but extends to the wider field of women's sport in general. The opening words of Cashman and Weaver's preface to *Wicket Women: Cricket and Women in Australia* (1991) reflect this.

The number of books written on Australian sport is immense, but almost all of them are about men, with books about animals in sport (horses in particular) as the next largest category. (Cashman and Weaver 1991, vii)

This statement was again quoted by noted Canadian sport historian Patricia Vertinsky (1994) in her much lauded research on 'Gender Relations, Women's History and Sport History: A decade of changing enquiry, 1983-1993'. It provided a rare critique of the treatment of the analysis of women and sport history at that time using several references to the lack of Australian literature.

In an attempt to rectify this lack of attention, Cashman and Weaver published *Wicket Women: Cricket and Women in Australia* in 1991 and Marion Stell followed with *Half the Race: A History of Australian Women in Sport* in the same year. Both of these major contributors to women's sport history in Australia commented on the rarity of written acknowledgement in relation to women and sport despite the increasing levels of participation and the high level of success of Australian women athletes. Stell's book describes the development of women's sport in Australia from 1788 through to the late 1980s, with some references to 1990. The research covers a large number of women's sport issues including women and sportswear, medical and social hurdles, Aboriginal sportswomen, the impact of feminism, and the importance of education and the school system in the growth of women's sporting opportunities. A major emphasis of the research is the analysis of the barriers that women have had to contend with in order to play sport. Stell states that these include arguments based on medical, aesthetic and moral grounds, or on the basis of what is considered appropriate behaviour for women (Randall 1991). Stell argues that men, in order to maintain male dominance, often deliberately provided these barriers. This is exemplified in attempts to limit women's participation in sport through male control of clubs, competitions and selections – often for such highly regarded events as the Olympic and Commonwealth Games. Women were vilified and humiliated in the media, denied permission to compete overseas and excluded from the use of facilities, funding and resources.

Vertinsky cites Marion Stell (1991) as providing additional insight into the treatment of women in sport, with the dominant theme being the deliberate efforts of Australian men to keep sport within the male domain, and to discourage and trivialise women in sport at every opportunity.

Cashman and Weaver's *Wicket Women* provides a comprehensive description of the origins and development of women's cricket in Australia. The book provides a unique opportunity for an examination of women in sport in general in Australia, by using the sport of cricket to emphasise the impact that the many accepted social attitudes and expectations have on women's

lifestyle choices. This is further explored with attention to the rise of feminism in Australia and its impact on women in determining the course of their own lives – including the right to play sport (Randall 1991). It is in this area that Cashman and Weaver's *Wicket Women* is a vital addition to the research regarding women and sport in Australia. Through the medium of cricket, it manages to explore the many factors that have inhibited the development and acceptance of women's sport in general in Australia.

Cashman and Weaver (1991) and Marion Stell (1991) research the way the media sexualised and marginalised women in Australian sport. Both books provide evidence of the way the media inhibited and trivialised the development of women's sport in Australia.

A review of both Stell and Cashman and Weaver's publications (mentioned above) by Leonie Randall, 'Women's Sport: A Review of three works' suggests that both works could have benefitted from a greater use of oral history. Randall states that the methodology, which would incorporate the actual words and memories of women, could have potentially offered 'a rich and evocative yield' of experiences (Randall 1992, p.217).

Leonie Randall's contribution to women and sport in Australia, *A Fair Go? Women in Sport in South Australia 1945-1965*, published in 1988, is a rare study into women's exclusion from sport in western culture. The research deals with women's participation in sport, and the effects of social changes on the position of women in sport in South Australia.

Although women are beginning to be recognised in sport history, these few references are by far surpassed by the level of research employed in the study of men's sport. While references to women in sport are on the increase, men have undertaken the majority of sport history research, throughout its developing years in Australia and the UK. Women have been underrepresented in the academia area of sport history research.

Historian Douglas Booth (2002) states in his publication on the foundations of sport history in Australia, that the official birth of Australian sport history occurred in June 1977. It was at the inaugural meeting for the making of the 'Sporting Traditions' that the biennial conferences began and from which the Australian Society for Sport Historians (ASSH) was formed in 1983. The following year saw the launch of ASSH's own journal, *Sporting Traditions*. This publication while highlighting the ground breaking research of historian Bill Mandle and his contribution to the awakening of research in sport and its importance in defining Australian nationalism also noted that the genre of sport history in Australia did not really take hold until a decade later.

By the early 1990s sports history, it seemed, had 'arrived' in Australia as a sub-discipline, and, just as importantly, was also recognised by a small number of researchers who cast their intellectual nets more widely – whether in history, politics, or sociology. (Adair 2002 p.12)

This decade introduced the works of historians interested in sport and Australian history including Mandle, Booth, Vamplew, Stoddart, Adair, Cashman, Tatz, Jobling, O'Hara, Philips, Hay and Murray. During this period a number of pioneering publications on Australian sport history were published. Three of these include, *Sport in Australia: A Social History* by Vamplew and Stoddart in 1994, *Paradise of Sport: The Rise of Organised Sport in Australia* by Richard Cashman in 1995 and *Sport in Australian History* by Adair and Vamplew published in 1997.

While these three publications are by no means the extent of research being undertaken on sport history in Australia at that time, they represent major contributions to what was an emerging area of research. All three provided groundbreaking studies into the role of sport in the history of Australia. *Sport in Australia: A Social History* is an edited collection of chapters on individual sports and related histories, with differing degrees of analysis. Some chapters are simple descriptions of players and events while others attempt innovative analysis, placing sport within a broader social and cultural context. Most authors acknowledge women's exclusion from sport participation for most of

the nineteenth century and even into the twentieth and provide a welcome interpretative approach to the study of sport in Australia (Nauright 1994). References to women's participation cover a number of sports including Australian Rules, boxing, cricket and a six-page discussion of women's involvement in rowing. The book also includes a chapter on *Soccer* by Philip Mosely and Bill Murray on the history of the spread of association football in Australia from 1880 through to the early 1990s. Unfortunately, there is no reference to women's football or the role of women in the development of the game in Australia. While the book includes some discussion on gender, it is clear that women's sport is still the subject of discrimination, opposition and neglect. Wray Vamplew claimed in the chapter 'Australians and Sport' that 'Women in Australian Sport have not yet had a 'fair go' (1994, p.16).

Paradise of Sport: The Rise of Organised Sport in Australia is a highly regarded addition to Australian sport history. It is innovative in its approach as it assumes that 'sport does not merely reflect other social and political processes: it is an active and powerful agent in forming social and cultural values' (Cashman 1995, vii). The book is concerned with the development of organised sport in Australia during the period 1850 through to 1914, often regarded as the formative years of Australian sport. However what makes this publication different from other historical sport research is its critical approach. 'Issues involving power, class, gender, race and ethnicity are fought out regularly both on and off the field' (Cashman 1995, vii). To this end the book includes a chapter on gender.

Cashman's (1995) chapter on gender highlights the dominance of male culture in sport from the 1850s and that there has been a long history of marginalising women's sport in Australia. Cashman argues that despite being confined to the periphery and having to survive with limited encouragement, recognition and resources, women have been involved in a wide variety of sports (Cashman 1995). While the chapter provides examples of women's sport development, including team sports, there is no mention of women's football. The chapter does mention that 'there were some instances of women forming football teams', however no details are provided. The development of

women's team sports is restricted to hockey, softball and netball and their development through to the 1970s, despite the growing numbers of women playing football through that period.

Paradise of Sport questions whether Australia is indeed a paradise of sport when so many are marginalised and discriminated against. The cover photo of Cathy Freeman (representing both the Indigenous minority and women while at the same time achieving the highest sporting honor for Australia by winning a gold medal at the Sydney Olympics in 2000) is a fitting image in relation to the questions raised in the book. While Australia on the one hand celebrates Cathy Freeman's gold medal, sport in Australia continues to marginalise and discriminate against both women and the indigenous minorities.

Sport in Australian History by Adair and Vamplew published in 1997 reflects an increasing academic interest in Australian sport history while at the time maintaining a level of social analysis. This is evident in the chapter 'Sporting Women' where women's place in sport is thought to be the result of socialisation rather than genetics (Adair & Vamplew 1997). The chapter continues to provide a history of women's involvement in sport from colonial times, but also critically analyses the previous work done by Stell in *Half the Race* in the discussion of women's participation. At one point Adair and Vamplew suggest that while women may represent half the population they might only be a 'quarter of the race' in sport.

Despite the analysis of women's level of involvement in sport, the authors agree that women have had an ambivalent place in Australian sporting culture.

Although sportswomen have made considerable inroads into male sporting bastions, it is clear that they continue to face many gender specific obstacles in playing sport. (Adair and Vamplew 1997, p.61)

In the late 1990s historian Ed Jaggard published three articles, which highlighted the battles facing women in Australia's most culturally iconic and male dominated sport of surf life-saving. 'Chameleons in the Surf '(1997), 'Australian Surf Life-saving and the 'Forgotten Members'' (1999) and 'Tempering the Testosterone: Masculinity, Women and Australian Surf Lifesaving' (2001). The articles provide a rare insight into the role of women in the surf life-saving movement. The articles discuss the many prejudices and exclusions the women faced in being accepted into the sport prior to the official welcoming in 1980.

The 1992 publication of the *Oxford Companion to Australian Sport* (W. Vamplew ed.) examined the history of sport played in Australia up to that point with biographical information on leading sports people including women such as Dawn Fraser and Raelene Boyle. The second edition in 1994 added a section on women specifically and is recognised as a leading encyclopedic reference text for sport in Australia. The *Oxford Australian Feminism: A Companion* followed (Caine & Gatens 1998) and provided general information on Australian feminism with the use of interpretative essays on issues of interest throughout the history of Australian feminism.

Sport in Australian Society: Past and Present by J.A. Mangan and J. Nauright (eds) first published in 2000, provides an important addition to the literature on the impact of sport on Australian culture from the late eighteenth century through the late twentieth century. The publication is important because it dedicates two chapters to women and sport. The first is 'Ladies are specially invited': women in the culture of Australian Rules football' by Robert Hess which discusses the role of women in the history of the sport in Australia. 'Women's Sports and Embodiment in Australia and New Zealand' by Angela Burroughs and John Nauright addresses the history of women's participation in sport in both countries dating from the late nineteenth century. More importantly it highlights the resistance of a male-dominated public culture as a crucial factor in the lack of support and recognition for women who were celebrating their increased freedom by participating in sport. The chapter discusses the impact of the media on how women were viewed in sport –

often trivialised, marginalised and sexualised. 'Most commonly, sportswomen are treated as 'wives and mothers', 'sex objects' or 'freaks'.' (Burroughs and Nauright 2000, p.198) They acknowledge that changing attitudes over the latter part of the twentieth century have aided women's involvement in sport and have in some cases provided opportunities for women to participate in the more male-dominated sports such as football, boxing and weightlifting. Nonetheless, women's involvement is still subject to 'a subtle mix of complex ideologies that claim women's achievements as inferior to men's.' (Burroughs and Nauright 2000). Women's football in Australia is mentioned in the chapter as having its beginnings in the 1960s. They also refer to the increasing popularity of the sport as a winter alternative to netball.

Megan Stronach and Daryl Adair's 2009 publication, 'Brave new world' or 'sticky wicket'? Women, management and organisational power in Cricket Australia', looks at the 2003 structural change adopted by Cricket Australia. Although the recent amalgamation of both the Australian Cricket Board and Women's Cricket Australia to form the national body Cricket Australia provided women with additional opportunities in the game, including coaching, junior development, financial and sponsorship support, women are still largely left out of the decision making process. Stronach and Adair argue that this is evident in women's absence in state cricket organisations and the Australia Cricket Board.

As these publications highlight, women have faced many struggles in order to play sport. Yet, paradoxically, in regards to women's sporting achievements there is little debate that Australian women have repeatedly outperformed their male counterparts in terms of winning medals at the Olympic Games. Dennis Philips in his book *Australian Women at the Olympic Games* which was published in 1992 takes a rare look at the achievements of these women in a male dominated and highly discriminatory environment. Importantly the research in part is based on oral history interviews with prominent women Olympians. The book includes personal experiences and reminiscences of these women who represented Australia at the highest level. Phillip's research

offers an alternative way of recognising and valuing female sport achievement (Adair 2009).

It is important to highlight the influence of sociologists on the research into sport in Australia. The 1997 article, 'Out of the Shadows: The Critical Sociology of Sport in Australia, 1986 to 1996', by David Rowe, Jim McKay and Geoffrey Lawrence traces the emergence of critical sports sociology and its development in Australia between 1986 and 1996. It provides an overview of the history of the study of sport and sociology in Australia and discusses the changes in theoretical direction and the new lines of research being explored during that time. The article mentions the study of women in sport from the early insights provided by Ken Dyer in publications such as '*Challenging the Men: The Social Biology of Female Sporting Achievement*' in 1982 and with Susan Mitchell, '*Winning Women: Challenging the Norms in Australian Sport*' in 1985. Both publications raised, as an issue of concern, the marginalisation of women in sport. A more critical analysis of gender in sport was undertaken by Jim McKay in his work in the 1990s which included, '*No pain, no gain: sport and Australian culture*' (1991), 'Sport and the social construction of gender' (1992) and also in that same year, 'Why so few? Women executives in Australian sport'. The article highlights the work of leading Australian sociology academic Lois Bryson who produced several publications in the 1980s concerning the effects of male dominated sport on the oppression of women, in particular her 1983 publication, 'Sport, ritual, and the oppression of women' and her 1987 'Sport and the maintenance of masculine hegemony'. Bryson argued that the hegemonic masculinity of sport resulted in the 'inferiorising of women and their activities' and generally worked to oppress women in society. More importantly at that time, Bryson was one of the first of the sociologists to provide an academic contribution to the study of gender and sport in Australia. Adair (2009) adds that further studies that include both sociology and an element of history include B. Stoddart, '*Saturday Afternoon Fever: Sport in the Australian Culture*' and P. Kell, '*Good Sports: Australian Sport and the Myth of the Fair Go*', published in 1986 and 2000 respectively. A more recent publication by Tony Ward, '*Sport*

in Australian National Identity: Kicking Goals (2010) looks at the importance and relevance of sport in the development of Australia's national character.

Concluding comments

The amount of literature available in relation to women's football in Australia is limited. While there are a few dedicated contributions from Watson, Williams, Hay and Murray much remains to be done in order for the history of the game to be recognised. An absence of research based on qualitative methodologies in the study of women and sport in Australia, particularly football (when compared with its wider use in many international footballing nations) represents a lack of opportunity to recognise the voices of women in sport. This is despite a number of recommendations for its use from noted historians (Booth 2005, Randall 1992, Williams 2007).

While there are a number of highly regarded publications on the history of sport in Australia, the vast majority of the content is about men. Many noted Australian historians recognise that more research needs to be done in relation to women's sport in Australia (Cashman, Murray and Hay 2014). Adair (2009) concludes that the analysis of women in Australian sport history has reached a hiatus with the twenty-first century yet to produce much in the way of new research. There are a number of exceptions. These include an increasing number of articles published in journals such as *Sporting Traditions* with women's golf (Haig - Muir 2000) and aerobics (Brabazon, Mills 2000), *Football Studies* with rugby league (Little 2001), *Sport History Review* with women's golf (Haig-Muir 2004) and the *International Journal of the History of Sport* with women's cycling (Kinsey 2011).

The above review reveals the need for greater attention to research in relation to women and sport in Australia. More important is the need to address the lack of recognition of the contribution made by the many women who have pioneered, played and administered the game of football in Australia. This attention to research will provide an opportunity for women's voices to be heard and their achievements to be written into the history of women's sport in this country.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

This dissertation aims to create an opportunity for the women who pioneered the game of football in Australia to share their experiences, and to advance the understanding of gender and football history. The documentation of women's football history has been largely ignored in Australia and despite calls to address this lack of attention (Murray and Hay 2006, 2014, Adair 2009), little academic research has been undertaken.

This chapter begins with a discussion of my underlying philosophical approach to the research, by outlining the epistemological assumptions, theoretical perspective and methodological approach, which provide support and context to this work. The remainder of the chapter discusses my research process and the methods I used to address my research question.

My epistemological position or my philosophical belief on how knowledge is acquired or what constitutes acceptable knowledge is based on an interpretative view. This philosophical approach emerged as an attempt to understand and explain human and social reality (Crotty 1998). My research is interested in the exploration of social meaning, or how and why women are involved with the game of football, and what meanings they attribute to their experiences. It is interested in advancing understanding, which is constructed by different people in different ways through human interactions and rituals (Crotty 1998). This is in contrast to a positivist approach, which suggests that;

concepts such as feelings, emotions, beliefs and so on have no place in research as they cannot be directly observed or measured, they are unreliable and they are not constant over time. (Gratton and Jones 2010, p.16)

Unlike positivism, the interpretive view assumes that human behavior is not determined by external factors and processes that researchers can measure, but instead is shaped by the meaning people have of the world. (Henn, Weinstein and Foard 2006, p. 15)

This perspective holds as its central theme, that the only way to understand social reality is from the perspective of those enmeshed within it (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011).

Gratton and Jones (2010) believe that in the study of sport, the key argument rejecting the positivist approach is that sport is a social phenomenon and that those who participate, while being acted upon by a number of external forces, have a free will to respond in any way they choose. They are not inanimate objects whose behavior can simply be understood as a product of causal relationships.

This philosophical position draws on feminist and critical social theory. It values personal experience, the search for understanding and subjectivity, as well as providing a focus on social justice. Critical theory and feminist perspectives seek to access subjugated knowledges – the unique viewpoints of oppressed groups (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011). The critical position challenges knowledge creation processes that effectively support the oppression of minorities (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011). A critical process of enquiry seeks to identify systems that may be creating conditions and placing restrictions on less powerful people or minorities, and supports these people to change the world for themselves.

Interpretative, feminist and critical research philosophies are often associated with qualitative research methodologies. This is because these methodologies are best suited to the understanding of how participants in a particular setting make sense of, and give meaning to, their lives and experiences (Cox 2010). In relation to the study of women and women's sport history, it provides an opportunity for sportswomen to articulate their own feelings about playing and enjoying sport (Scruton et al. 1999).

Qualitative research provides the researcher with a wide range of methodologies from which to choose in order to achieve the desired research outcome. Oral history is one such method. The term 'oral history' can be defined as a special method of interview where the researcher and interviewee are engaged in a process of story telling and listening – in other words a collaborative process of narrative building (Hesse-Biber 2011).

Oral history as a form of qualitative research provides an ideal framework for the analysis of women's experiences. Joan Sangster (1994) suggests in her discussion of feminist research and oral history that oral history:

provides a means of placing women's voices at the centre of history and highlighting gender as a category of analysis; and the prospect that women interviewed will shape the research agenda by articulating what is of importance to them. (Sangster 1994, p.6)

My research acknowledges the experiences and stories of the women involved as 'containing and reflecting personal truths' (Geiger 1990, p. 170), and in doing so reflects the values of a feminist methodology. Oral history, as explained later in this chapter, was used as a method to provide an opportunity for those women whose experiences in football have not always been included in research agendas.

A reflexive review of my personal position

In order fully to explore the reasons behind my constructed approach to the research, it is important at this point to provide an account of myself within this research project.

For feminist researchers the visibility of the researcher's personal experience and self-interrogation of their own values and motivations embedded in the particular research process are pivotal. (Humberstone 1997, p.200)

As a father of two girls (women now), both of whom were involved in sport, I position myself as a male pro-feminist or at least a supporter of feminist ideals. I agree with the proposition that women should have an equal opportunity to participate in sport or any other activity. Messner (1990) argued that a pro-feminist perspective is needed for a male researcher to overcome his ingrained bias and exclusive social access to the world of sport. Messner claims that this relates to the decades of male research into sport, during which time gender issues have been neglected. To address this potential degree of bias, my research approach further assumes that 'feminist visions of an egalitarian society are desirable' (Messner 1990, p. 149). This perspective is reflected in the aim of the research in documenting and acknowledging the experiences of women in football.

As a researcher I need to be reflexive, to hold an awareness that,

All knowledge is affected by the social conditions under which it is produced; it is grounded in both the social location and the social biography of the observer and the observed. (Mann & Kelly 1997, p.392)

This process is concerned with the researcher being aware of his or her own 'positionality' in the research process. As a white, 57-year-old male, pro-feminist researcher from a middle-class background, I need to be mindful of my position in society, any particular biases that I may have, and how these may or may not affect my research (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011). Some researchers believe that because different groups within society have specific experiences and unique biases, a successful oral history research project can only be conducted by like groups. For example, only women can interview women. Minister (1991) argued that because women are of the same gender and subculture that they best understand how to talk to each other. Other researchers suggest that difference, if based on a reflexive practice, can help to give voice to those who are normally silenced within society (Sparkes 1994). My point of connection with research participants was my familiarity with the game.

The interview process relied on the relationships that were developed between myself as a researcher and the women involved. By practising reflexivity I developed a consciousness of my position in society and how that may impact on the collaborative relationship I built with the women involved, and the authority that I had over their stories and experiences. For Katherine Borland (1991) reflecting on our practice, means we can move toward a more sensitive research methodology. I have endeavoured to ensure that the narrative is analysed and interpreted as a truth and a measure of meaning to those women who chose to share their stories.

While the women and men interviewees did not directly indicate that they held feminist perspectives or were feminists, their collective desires to be treated equally supports the feminist desire for an egalitarian society.

The following section of this chapter discusses oral history as the methodology I used to address my research question – creating an opportunity for the women who pioneered the game, both on and off the field, to share their experiences.

Oral history

Paul Thompson (2008) insists that all history depends ultimately upon its social purpose. Thompson goes on to say that through history ordinary people seek to understand the upheavals and changes, which they experience in their own lives. The challenge of oral history lies in creating an opportunity to 'give back to the people who made and experienced history, through their own words, a central place' (Thompson 2008, p. 2). Thompson's original work on oral history was published in 1978 and it was not until this time that a methodology based on oral history became widely acceptable.

What is oral history?

'Oral history' has been described in many different ways. Oral history, defined simply, can be referred to as the recording of personal testimony delivered in oral form (Yow 2014) or as recorded speech of any kind ranging from casual reminiscing among family, friends and co-workers to more formally organised

and sanctioned arrangements. Linda Shopes (2013) argues that it more typically refers to what folklorists call personal experience narratives – that is, orally transmitted, autobiographical stories crafted to communicate meaning, or what is valued, to others (Shopes 2013, p.119). The Oral History Association (2010) defines oral history as ‘a way of collecting and interpreting human memories to foster knowledge and human dignity’ (Shopes 2013).

While there are many ways to describe oral history, the term has a more precise meaning for practitioners (Shopes 2013, Leavy 2011). Linda Shopes (2013) acknowledges that the term ‘oral history’ can take on various shapes and forms, but claims that it also has a more disciplined aspect. For oral history to be recognised as a professional disciplined practice, Shopes argues it needs to adhere to the following six characteristics. The first is that it involves an interview where someone is telling a story in response to the queries of another. Second, an interview only becomes oral history once it is recorded, processed and made available for general research, reinterpretation and verification. Third, oral history interviewing is historical in intent in that it ‘seeks new knowledge about and insights into the past through an individual biography’ (p.120). Fourth, oral history is understood both as an act of memory and inherently subjective account of the past – not the unmitigated facts of what happened in the past. Fifth, an oral history interview is an enquiry in depth – ‘a planned and scheduled, serious and searching exchange, one that seeks a detailed, expansive, and reflective account of the past’ (p.120). Finally, oral history is fundamentally oral, and needs to represent what was truly said, reflecting both conventions and dynamics of the spoken word (Shopes 2013).

Oral history is a methodology that allows us to get at the valuable knowledge and rich life experience of marginalized persons and groups that would otherwise remain untapped, and, specifically, offers a way of accessing subjugated voices. (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011)

The development of oral history as a methodology

Oral history has its own history and as a modern movement has its roots in many locations, over many centuries. (Sharpless 2007, p.7)

Oral history as a recognised methodology has risen only since the early twentieth century and become more widely accepted since the 1940s. Its supporters claim that it can be traced back to ancient oral tradition (Sharpless 2007).

In fact, oral history is as old as history itself. It was the first kind of history. (Thompson 2008, p. 22)

Before the development of literacy, all history relied on oral traditions adopted by each society as a way of ensuring that matters of importance were retained for future generations. Despite the traditional prevalence of orally transmitted historical sources, such traditions fell into disfavour in the scientific movement of the late nineteenth century, and there arose a prejudice against oral history that remained strong for more than fifty years (Sharpless 2007). The development of an academic profession in the study of history and its many qualification requirements provided that the written document or manuscript hold pride of place as the primary source of historical record (Thompson 2008, Young 2006).

Reliance on oral sources fell into disfavour during the late 19th and much of the 20th centuries, as the practice of history became increasingly professionalized and as positivism became the reigning academic paradigm. (Shopes 2013, p.124)

However not all historians were in favour of the scientific approach and during the first one-third of the twentieth century many historians began to see oral history accounts as valid (Sharpless 2007). During this period oral sources were once more recognised and used in the study of history. In the United States, historians used oral history to illuminate traditional historical accounts of American culture, including former slave narratives, the settlement of California, the west and the southern states, and eventually accounts of the

Second World War. Oral history was not generally acknowledged until Columbia historian Allan Nevins established the Oral History Research Office (OHRO) at Columbia University, New York in 1948. Nevins's project at that time focused on subjects prominent in politics, business and other professions and resulted in a group of biographies of powerful white males (Sharpless 2007). Several universities soon followed with oral history programs being established in Texas (1952), California at Berkeley (1954), California at Los Angeles and Michigan (1959).

During the 1960s and 1970s oral history research expanded rapidly, and was particularly evident in the USA and Britain. This growth was a direct result of the development of the tape recorder by the Philips Company in 1963, and the availability of funding for such research (Thompson 2008, Sharpless 2007). Primarily, oral history was used to record the memoirs of suitably important people. However, with the development of social and cultural history, the philosophical underpinnings of the oral history movement provided the historian with the opportunity to include people of 'less importance'. It was able to include 'the perspectives of disadvantaged people who traditionally have been either ignored or misrepresented in conventional historical records' (Robertson 2006, p. 3).

The establishment of the written document as the source of traditional history and the manuscript as the principal tool of the historian had begun to raise a number of concerns (Young 2006). The main criticism of this historical approach centred on the emphasis placed on key figures, moments and eras of social and political upheaval which specifically related to the dominant cultural constitution (Young 2006). This emphasis excluded 'the minutiae of lived experience' and in particular those experiences which the traditional historians considered 'ordinary'. 'Cultures unable to contribute have therefore been unavailable to, or excluded from, traditional histories except through the perception (and thus the filter) of a literate few' (Young 2006, p.2). This included the poor, working classes, non-whites, women, non-heterosexuals and any culture considered a minority (Young 2006).

This developmental change in the study of the social and cultural and their relationship with history building had an immediate and lasting impact on the use of oral history.

The impact of the social history movement on oral history

Oral sources were being identified as a perfect match for the study of social change. Social historians began to research the experiences of ordinary people, and oral history became widely used in the study of the civil rights movement, anti-Vietnam War protests, the feminist movement and by historians interested in the history of labour and working class people. The women's movement (heralding the impact that feminism would eventually have on oral history methodology) also adopted oral history as a way to further its ideals, as a way of uncovering women's daily experiences in creating a new history, which recognised their voices and experiences.

Oral History, easily accessible and useful for talking with almost any type of person, became a primary tool for documenting the lives of ordinary people. (Sharpless 2007, p.12)

Social historians were beginning to question the status quo and to explore the interests of multi-racial, multi-ethnic populations with an emphasis on class relationships. They sought to understand the experiences of ordinary people. Two of the most celebrated uses of oral history at that time were the rise of research into the history of ethnic groups in American society including Native-American history and African-American culture.

The development of oral history in Australia paralleled the emergence of a new social history in the 1970s, 'with a near obsession to give a voice, quite literally, to anyone who might otherwise be marginalised by historical enquiry' (Home 2006, p.71).

Women were interviewed, Aborigines, workers, strikers, union officials – anyone who might not otherwise appear in the written word except as generalised or even imagined entities, or statistics, and sometimes not even as these. (Home 2006, p.71)

Women's history, sport history and oral history

The study of women's history began to gather some interest even before the revival of the feminist movement in the late 1960s. Inspired by the new practice of social history which was opening up the recovery of experiences of ordinary people, researchers such as Alice Clark, Olive Schreiner and Eileen Power set out to restore women to the historical record (Downs, 2010).

Despite 'the resounding silence of history books on the matter, these scholars knew that the world that we have inherited was made not only by men but by women as well' (Downs 2010, p. 9). Research articles began to address areas of women's lives including work, domestic life and motherhood. Oral history began to include women's history, as a subject for investigation in its own right and to show 'a commitment to rescuing women's history, not from condescension, but from neglect and exclusion' (Bornat and Diamond 2007, p. 21).

This trend was clearly evident in Great Britain and is showcased in the journal *Oral History*, which first appeared in 1969 and subsequently highlighted women's history and women's lives in issues starting in 1977. In North America, the growth of women's history and oral history related to the tensions between the role of women and politics. In the 1960s feminist activists were striving for a history to establish women as heroines with 'explanations of oppression', thereby inspiring others to take political action. Women's contributions to oral history at this point were motivated by a desire to right wrongs and to challenge traditional views of history (Bornat and Diamond 2007). This shift continued into the 1980s, as women's history and oral history began to take on a more feminist approach as they became more involved in the struggle to recognise personal experience. Oral history and feminism challenged the existing approaches to history-making by including women's issues in the wider discourse of history. This influence had a greater

effect on practising historians by widening their areas of interest to include different ethnicities, cultures, health, disability, public and social history.

The 1990s provided the relationship with a more critical perspective. Oral history and women's history had long been involved with acknowledging women and their role in history, however this period identified a shift towards a more critical review of oral history as a process. This change in direction was highlighted in the interest that oral historians and feminists took in the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee (Bornat and Diamond 2007). This new direction led to greater scrutiny of the interview process and greater attention being directed into the areas of subjectivity, reflexivity and the role of memory and reminiscence. More attention was being directed at how the past is remembered and researched.

The relationship between the development of women's history and the acknowledgement of oral history has already been stated, however it is important to note that while the 'three histories', women's history, oral history and feminism, have come a long way since the late nineteenth century and have developed rapidly in the mid to late twentieth century there are still some gaps. There is a need to undertake oral history research in relation to women's sport history in Australia due to the lack of traditional sources of historical research, media attention and archival resources. Oral history research provides an avenue in which to develop an Australian history of women in sport. To date sport history, and in particular women's sport history in Australia, has been substantially left out of the written record.

The Oral history project is present-centered out of a necessity to gain a critical insight into the experiences and perspectives of the women involved in football in Australia today.

Women in sport

The treatment of women, sport and their correlated histories can be traced back to the roots of contemporary sport. 'The modern era, especially the period encompassing the century and a half after 1800 witnessed the

development of industrial capitalism, large urban areas, and complex, highly organized sports' (Struna 2000, p. 188). This development in sport was mainly identified in Britain and North America, and had its formative roots in the public school system, which provided the institutional framework for organised sport. The school system, particularly in Britain, was ruled by the ideology of the masculine. Sport was the domain of the competitive and physically strong male.

Games playing in the boys' public schools provided the dominant image of masculine identity in sports and a model for their future development in Britain and throughout the world. (Hargreaves 1994, p. 43)

Women's involvement in sport at this time was largely frowned upon. Victorian ideals held that women were physically and intellectually weak. They created a lasting legacy based on the 'myth of female frailty' (Theberge 2000). This legacy was to become a defining feature of ideas about women and sport. Just as the Victorian period gave rise to the development of modern sport, it also provided that sport be the domain of the masculine. In order to be good at sport you had to be either a male or display masculine traits. Women were symbolically aligned with Nature and to their reproductive roles and positions as wives and mothers in the home. Sport was viewed by Victorian society as totally unsuitable for women (Hargreaves 1994).

Women's involvement in sport was controlled by the ideologies of the Victorian period. This continued through to the turn of the twentieth century and beyond. Medical science, and its male-dominated view that women were passive victims of their biological selves, continued to discriminate against women by opposing women's right to seek an education and any 'other activities which would cause constitutional overstrain and inability to produce healthy offspring' (Hargreaves 1994, p.45). The idealised view of the Victorian family – the father as the patriarchal ruler and the wife as the homemaker and member of the gentler sex – 'was integrated with dominant medical opinions about the female body and elevated as a concept which permeated social consciousness, affecting women's participation in physical activities'

(Hargreaves 1994, p.51). The biological differences between men and women, relating primarily to the reproductive role of women, provided the major justification for the Victorians to limit women's participation in sport. Biological explanations were provided as 'sound reasoning' for discriminating against women's involvement.

The ideology of the Victorian period, which labeled women as weak and fragile, became a defining feature of ideas about women, gender and physical activity (Theberge 2000). The effects of the constructed inequalities between men and women resulted in a deeply ingrained attitude of discrimination, still evident today.

Industrialisation, and the resulting increase and change in the patterns of consumption and leisure, positively affected the position of women throughout society. Increased opportunities for employment led to a greater level of independence and a changing role in the family structure. The most prominent factor in the ability of women to participate in sport was the development of education for women. Within the schools, colleges and universities, physical education and sport grew and eventually became an integral part of the curriculum. Women were beginning to be more involved in such sports as gymnastics, swimming, croquet, tennis, athletics and cycling which were considered, by the dominant ideology, to be more appropriate in keeping with their roles as wives and mothers. While there is evidence to suggest that there are links between women and football that go back to at least the late Victorian period, few women played the game. It was the new experiences of women during WWI that acted as an impetus for the development of the women's game (Hargreaves 1994, p.141). The World Wars and inter-war periods also saw increased opportunities for women in all aspects of society including employment, education and sport. Women began to be involved with all codes of football, including the round-ball version. Women began to play the game in Great Britain in the late nineteenth century, continuing through the inter war years in which the game experienced a rare surge of popularity.

Women wanted to work, they wanted to vote and they wanted to play, and they were no longer prepared to accept that they were inferior to the male population. (Newsham 1994, p. 1)

While it is not the purpose of this thesis to review the history of the emancipation of women, it is important to understand the struggle women faced in society and recognise that many of the discriminations associated with Victorian times are still having an impact upon how they are viewed today. This is also true in relation to how history has treated the role of women in society.

The disciplined study of the history of sport itself did not emerge until the 1960s with the vast bulk of the research being devoted to men. The little attention paid to women's culture categorised them as a completely separate entity from men. The research took on a more positivist view, in that, there were 'fixed notions of human behavior for men and women – an idea which constituted the very essence of the problem of change for women' (Hargreaves 1994, p. 44). In line with this, women's history was mainly concerned with identifying heroines and women of note and recording their contribution to society separate from and subordinate to men.

Most of the research into sport history at this point was descriptive in nature, dealing with the who, where and by how much. Sport had yet to be identified as a social phenomenon and was therefore neglected as a source of historical and sociological analysis. When sport history recognised the achievements of women, they were moments of 'unfeminine' or 'bizarre' behaviour. A good example of this is the treatment meted out by the media, tennis fans and so-called tennis experts towards Martina Navratilova.

Noting her high-tech, precision-orientated training methods, they characterized her as a bionic sci-fi creation of her training team – a kind of unnatural, even monstrous Amazon who has the women's game pinned to the mat. (Cahn 1995, p.1)

Very little was known about the roles of ordinary women involved in sport or the values they brought to their leisure time. It was not until the 1970s, with increasing evidence of feminist intervention and political activism and the emerging role of the social historian that the research focus began to change. This change in direction altered the way researchers viewed the role of women and sport in society.

Feminist researchers recognised that most of the work undertaken in women's history and sport history was descriptive and had little to do with interpretation. Researchers such as Nancy Struna saw the need to 'move beyond compensatory measures such as mapping particular women's experiences and to explore such themes as identity, conflict and the relativity of equality' (Struna 1984, p. 129).

This search for greater meaning led to a change in the direction of research into women's sport history. It was reflected in the research that began to appear in the 1980s and rapidly increased into the 1990s. Research by Helen Lenskjy 1986, Jennifer Hargreaves 1986, 1994, Nancy Therberge 1987, 1994 and Patricia Vertinsky 1990, 1994 is especially notable. These prominent researchers were calling for a

deeper study of the ways in which sport had historically perpetuated male dominance and female oppression—especially through male strength and power over female sexuality—and for a determined emphasis upon women-centered questions which might begin to erode the foundations of patriarchal control. (Vertinsky 1994, p. 11)

One of the most important effects of this research on women was that the use of the term 'gender' as a basis of research replaced the previous focus on the differences between men and women and began to focus on the relationships between them. This was a huge step in the analysis of women's experiences. Influential feminist writers and researchers began to use the term 'gender' to refer to the social construct of the relationship between the sexes. According

to Joan Scott's 1986 publication, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis':

those who worried that women's studies scholarship focused too narrowly and separately on women used the term "gender" to introduce a relational notion into our analytic vocabulary. According to this view, women and men were defined in terms of one another, and no understanding of either could be achieved by entirely separate study. (Scott 1986, p.1054)

Joanna Bornat and Hanna Diamond (2007) added that 'while 'women' as a term was used to highlight essential and particular qualities, 'gender' enabled a conceptualisation which focused on power relations between men and women while allowing for a more fragmented notion of 'woman' (Bornat and Diamond 2007, p. 25). More importantly, from a methodological standpoint,

it became possible to represent women in a plurality of identities in terms of class, race, ethnicity, age and sexuality and to recognise how such differences can lead to contested ideas of women's interests. (Bornat and Diamond 2007, p. 26)

The development in gendered understandings provided oral history and feminist study a more contextual basis from which to challenge the traditional practices of history making that had often neglected the lives of women. By highlighting gender as a category of analysis, oral history adopted a means of including women and their experiences into the realm of historical record by placing women's voices at the centre of history. Feminism, women's history and oral history have developed alongside each other over the past thirty years and the relationships between all three have been productive. Feminism has incorporated a number of 'feminisms' and now includes histories of different races, ethnicities, ages, sexualities, abilities and cultures. This multiplicity of feminism is easily relatable to football and women's involvement in the game. Increased access and opportunity to football by women and girls generally is evidence of the impact of transformative politics associated with a liberal-feminist agenda. This political agenda over the years has resulted in a number of historical changes, which has greatly improved women's access to

sport. These include the much heralded Title IX of the Education amendments in the USA, Federal legislation passed in 1972 that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any educational program or activity receiving Federal funding assistance. This legislative change precipitated a virtual revolution for girls and women in sports and has paved the way for significant increases in athletic participation for girls and women at all levels of education in the US. This change in legislation was followed by an increasing development in anti-discrimination reforms in government and sport policy worldwide. These changes resulted in an increasing degree of rights for all groups of women, including women with disability, lesbians, bisexual women, and black and South Asian women.

Oral history increasingly provides an avenue for the experiences of women to be incorporated into the mainstream of history. It also challenges many established interpretations of historical record.

Feminists often use oral history as a way of gaining rich qualitative data from those whose experiences have not always been included in research agendas. In this regard it is a tool for accessing silenced or excluded knowledge, for unearthing and preserving this missing knowledge. (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007, p. 3)

The study of sport through the lens of feminist scholarship—or more appropriately, ‘sport feminisms’—is now an established subject field within critical sport studies. Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, western sport feminists from predominantly English-speaking countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, fought to establish feminism as a legitimate tool through which to analyse the interaction of sport and society.

The growth of women’s involvement in sport and the recognition of women in sport history can now be better understood and acknowledged because of feminist intervention and the emergence of the social historian. The relationship between feminist theory and social history has had much to do

with the growth of oral history as it provides an avenue for the experiences of women in sport to be heard and recognised.

Criticisms of oral history theory and methodology

Oral history's value as a practice of history methodology has long been a topic of academic speculation and discussion. Despite its gradual acceptance over the past fifty years, oral history still raises concerns among historians.

Criticisms leveled at oral history can be grouped into three categories: interviewing and questioning techniques; the standards of research undertaken in preparation; and questions of historical methodology (Grele 1995). Much has since been written on the interviewing process and technique, with literature available on learning to listen, ways to listen and how interviewing techniques may differ according to the type of person you are interviewing or the questions you are seeking to answer. Ronald J. Grele (1995) states that, 'while the literature may not prepare the interviewer for the nuances of the open interview, there is no reason why an interviewer, if well prepared, cannot learn to control these techniques' (Grele 1995, p.40). Charles Morrissey on 'Oral History Interviewing' in *The Oral History Reader* edited by Perks & Thomson (1998) went even further when he said 'to reduce interviewing to a set of techniques is, as one person put it, like reducing courtship to a formula' (Perks and Thomson 1998, p. 108).

The second group of criticism is aimed at research standards for preparation and is directed at the lack of preparation prior to interview through lack of training or quality of research. For Grele (1995), the onus of preparation is placed upon the interviewer and in this sense oral history is no different from any other methodology of historical research. Each historian must exercise his or her own personal judgment in the review of any source of information, and the highest standard of research be expected of all historians.

The third group of criticism involves questions of methodology. These criticisms include the authority of the written document over oral testimony, the accuracy of memory and the intrusion of subjective or social bias. The major criticism is focused on the accuracy of the spoken word as testimony

when it relies on memory as its source. Historians long believed that the information was distorted by age, nostalgia and the potential for intrusion of subjective or personal bias in the recollection of the past. These criticisms have been debated widely over recent years and this is reflected in the growing amount of literature on the subject. (Thompson 1978; Douglas, Roberts and Thompson 1988; Cahn 1994; Perks and Thomson 1998; Booth 2002; Home 2006; Jamieson 2006; Neuman 2006; Young 2006; Bornat and Diamond 2007; Thomson 2007; Hamilton and Shopes 2008; Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011).

A common theme of recent research in oral history states that the criticisms largely ignored the usefulness of oral testimony for historical purposes and that memory in fact has its own set of characteristics. Alistair Thomson (2007) suggests that the so-called unreliability of memory was also its strength. That the subjectivity of memory provides clues not only about the meanings of historical experience, but also about the relationships between past and present, memory and personal identity, and individual and collective memory (Thomson 2007, p. 50). This general lack of understanding as to the real value of oral testimony, has resulted in many of the criticisms directed at oral history. However recent studies seem to indicate that for many historians memory is now an accepted and valued source (Thomson, 2007).

Oral history has become an important source for understanding the past. The value of oral history in relation to this research is that it encourages participants to tell their stories in their own words. It provides a cohort previously overlooked with an opportunity to add to the pages of sport history. It gives access to information and perspectives not encountered in documentary sources.

The oral history research project

Linda Shopes (2011) argues that oral history is an ambiguous term that refers to a number of differing methods, but is distinguished from other kinds of interviewing. What makes oral history different from techniques such as semi-structured and in-depth interviewing is that it is a critical method for

understanding life experiences in a holistic way. While focusing on the individual it enables the interviewer to study process, or the individual journey, which can link personal circumstances and historical processes (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011).

While my research project is guided by a list of semi-structured interview questions based on those used by Barbara Cox in her 2010 PhD Thesis (See Appendix A), the more I developed as an interviewer the more I changed my approach. I began to use the list of questions only as a way to break the ice and to obtain some essential information concerning age, family makeup, place of birth and local address. While I referred occasionally to the list of questions in order to move the interview along, I always began with the open ended question 'How did you get involved in football?' and let the interview take an open and free-flowing format, one which sits more meaningfully with oral history as a qualitative method of interview. It allowed the interview more freedom to 'uncover processes and link individual experiences with the larger context in which those experiences occur' (Leavy 2011, p.10). This gave the interviewees some leeway to determine the content of the interviews (Leavy 2011).

Ethical considerations

One of the cornerstones of social research is the consideration of its ethical standpoint. While gaining the trust of the participants is considered essential in the successful outcome of the interview process, the protection of the participants involved in my research is paramount.

At the beginning of my research project, I was required to submit a detailed ethics application form and undergo a process, which involved the submission of an application to a designated ethics committee. My research is based on the oral testimony of human participants, and a range of procedures needed to be implemented to ensure that my proposal addressed any possible ethical concerns. This application involved detailed questions concerning the project description, participants and the recruitment of those to be interviewed, the

target population, intrusiveness of the project and the potential risks associated with the research. The application was approved and deemed to meet the requirements of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

The notion of informed consent – a participant's right to be informed about the nature of the study and its risks and benefits to them prior to consenting to participation is a major principle underlying the ethical policies that have developed in the treatment of research participants. This information is usually contained in an informed consent letter provided to each potential participant prior to his or her agreement to participate (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011).

In the initial stages of my research I made contact with potential participants by phone and/or email. After introducing myself and in some cases providing them with information about how I obtained their contact details, I explained the project in some detail. Once they agreed to be involved I sent them a detailed information sheet (Information to Participants Involved in Research Appendix B). An informed consent letter formally invited each participant to participate in the research project entitled 'An Oral History of Women's Soccer in Australia'. The letter provided detailed information about the project, myself and my supervisor, with relevant contact details. It also explained some potential risks of being involved in the project, rights in terms of confidentiality and how the project would be conducted. The letter also provided each participant with 'absolute control over the level of confidentiality of the information they disclose'. It was further explained that the transcript of each interview would be provided to each participant for review and amendment if required. The transcribed data would only be used once the participant had approved the written transcript of the interview. While I discussed the details of the process with each participant and highlighted that each would have final say on what I could use, there was no specific discussion concerning anonymity. Each of the participants understood that I would be using the transcript of our interview as the basis for my thesis and other potential publications. As a result, some of the transcripts were edited by the participants and comments made about how I was to use the information. The

contents of the transcript excerpts were then adjusted accordingly. However while there was no specific discussion about anonymity I feel that all participants were happy to be identified as part of the project.

A consent form was provided to each of the participants (Consent Form for Participants Involved in Research Appendix C) either at the time of interview or by email. This document certified the objectives of the project, together with the risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed. By signing the consent form each participant certified that all the procedures listed had been fully explained to them and that they had freely consented to participating. The individually signed documents were then returned to me.

Although the ethics application indicated that the level of risk to participants was low, the services of a psychologist for counseling was offered in order to safeguard against any painful memories or psychological trauma (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011). As part of this contact I explained that they were not bound to participate in any way, and in fact could at any stage decide against continuing on in the study.

Data gathering

Inspired by the potential of oral history as a method, this study is based on interviews with both women and men who have been involved with the women's game in Australia.

Initially I planned to interview women and men associated with the game nationwide, but the huge distances and associated costs involved prevented me from doing so. As a compromise, the interviews were restricted to the east coast of Australia, including the capital cities of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and the national capital, Canberra. Interviews were also conducted on the far north coast of New South Wales and the Gold Coast, Queensland.

After advising FFA of my project and receiving their approval and ongoing assistance, a list of potential interviewees was constructed. In choosing interviewees, I used a purposive sampling technique, selecting a number of

women and men to interview because they are typical examples of the issue I wish to study. My purpose was to interview women (and men) who are involved within the subject of research, or are typical examples of women (and men) who play or are involved with football in Australia (Alston and Bowles 2003).

An introductory list of potential interviewees was provided to me by Maggie Koumi, herself an included potential participant, derived from her long association with women's football in Victoria. Koumi is presently a member of both the Women's Committee and Historical Committee for Football Federation Victoria (FFV), and has been involved in football for many years as a player, club team coach, club and state team manager, and FFV Board member. This list provided me with fourteen possible participants all with individual contact details.

Introductions to, and recommendations from, other potential interviewees were accessed through word of mouth within the accepted framework of qualitative research practice known as 'snowballing'. This technique involves identifying interviewees who are then used to refer researchers on to other potential candidates for the research project. Snowball sampling is used in this case as an additional technique because I have only limited access to women involved in football who meet the criteria of my research, outside of my initial contacts (Alston and Bowles 2003). The women who were involved in the initial interviews (either known to me or referred initially through relevant sporting bodies), keenly suggested others who they considered would be interested and who, in their view, would add to the research. It became clear early in the process that the sourcing of potential interviewees was not going to be as difficult as first envisaged. The women involved were very keen and excited to be given an opportunity to share their experiences.

A total of eighteen women were interviewed, their ages ranging from 39 to 79. Three men were also interviewed, ranging in age from 53 to late 70s. Out of the total number of women, eight have represented their country at international level, two had played at State level and the others were at the

grassroots level. Three women have been active in high-level administrative roles at state and national levels with one presently coaching a semi-professional W League team and at an international level with the young Matildas. Most of the women identify with experiences from a wide cross-section of the game with high-level involvement in playing, coaching, administration and refereeing roles. The three men have all played the game at various levels, but have been mainly involved with coaching in the women's game. One of the men, a father of two daughters involved in the game, is a coach, club man and has been employed at a professional level in the administration of the women's game.

The attributes of the research participants ensure that the interviewees have been involved in more than one aspect of football. The interviewees were likely to have an in-depth knowledge and a depth of experience in football. The women and men that I interviewed were very keen to tell their stories, and in doing so often shared many of their personal experiences. These stories and experiences were framed in the world of football and the conversations often included reflections on the past and their respective journeys to the present. 'At the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individual's stories because they are of worth' (Seidman 2012, p. 9). I was honored to share their individual life experiences, and came to accept that they were true 'knowers' of their social world (Scraton 1997).

The interview process

The many nuances involved in the interviewing process are sources of substantial research discussion. Topics include the role of active listening, due preparation, reflexivity, bias and the many different approaches to and styles of interviewing (Thompson 1978, Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011, Alston and Bowles 2003). I endeavored to adopt the qualities of Paul Thompson's method in my approach to interviewing.

There are some essential qualities which the successful interviewer must possess: an interest and respect for people as individuals, and flexibility in response to them; an ability to show understanding and sympathy for their point of view; and, above all, a willingness to sit quiet and listen. (Thompson 1988, p.196)

Because collaboration between the interviewer and the interviewee is a central aspect of the oral history interview, I was aware of the nature of my relationship with those whom I interviewed. I was careful to understand my particular personal and research standpoints and what role I played in the interview process based on the power and authority, as a male, I brought to the interview situation. I was aware, for example, in my interviews, that I am both an “insider” and an “outsider.” I am part of the women’s football world, in that I have been a coach, administrator, fan and parent, but I am also a researcher, who inhabits a different social world from those I interview. (Hesse- Biber 2007)

Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber’s 2007 publication, *Feminist Research Practice*, provides a very good description of the way in which I initially approached the interviews in the research process:

I have a research agenda. I want to know “a something.” Yet I am open in the types of questions I ask, for they are not “yes” or “no” questions; I do not ask participants to answer a question with a fixed number of choices. I am conducting what in interviewing terminology is called an unstructured interview. Sometimes my questions are in response to what they tell me or I am asking for clarification of one of their answers. However, I do have some specific ideas I want to find out, but I do not have a specific set of questionnaire items with which I begin. I tend to “go with the flow” of the interview, seeing where it takes me (Hesse – Biber 2007, p. 112).

A list of sample questions was developed as a guide. The list was based on a review of the current literature available on oral history methodology, the interview process and on a review of similar research projects such as Barbara Cox’s 2010 PhD Thesis, which utilised in-depth interviews with a cross-section of women involved with the game. Although the questions were

designed to form the major structure of the project, as highlighted above, I began to use them differently as my experience in interviewing each participant grew. The questions were often used simply as a way of introducing myself and getting acquainted with each interviewee and, depending on how the conversation and relationship between myself and the participant developed, were used differently or not at all in some instances.

Potential interviewees were contacted initially by phone. The phone call enabled me to begin building rapport with the interviewees. This process included individual introductions and a brief description of the project followed by answering any questions they may have had. The call was then followed by an email of introduction and an attached information sheet (Information to Participants Involved in Research Appendix B). All potential interviewees were given an opportunity to show interest initially or after consideration of the information, which was provided in the initial email.

Interview times and venues were organised to meet the participants' convenience. I tried to make the process as easy and as comfortable for the participants as I could and worked with them to determine the date, time and location for the interviews to take place. Most of the interviews were held in cafes or restaurants before, during or after work. A total of ten interviews were held in these locations. Six interviews were done in the participants' homes with the remaining split between places of employment (2), and a library (1). Two interviews were carried out over the phone. The majority of participants were interviewed on their own except on four occasions where there were two. On two of these occasions the participants were married couples. In the other a participant had invited a friend to attend who turned out to be an Australian representative. The last two participants arrived together at the same pre-arranged location. All of the participants gave their approval for me to tape record the interview and to use the transcribed interviews, once approved, for any future publications (Consent Form for Participants Involved in Research Appendix C). I used the iTalk application on my iPhone as the main recording device with a hand held digital recorder as a backup.

Prior to interviews I made an effort to get to know the participants and tried to make them feel at ease. This process was very important as it assisted in developing a rapport between the interviewer and interviewee. This period often included a little of my background and how I got involved with the women's game, my study to date and other personal histories. 'One important goal in gaining rapport is to have your respondent feel safe, comfortable and valued' (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011, p. 105). In addition to making the participants feel comfortable, I used active listening skills: maintaining eye contact, giving encouraging gestures, and refraining from judging or interrupting the interviewee's stories. I was encouraging a knowledge-producing conversation between two people about the social history of women's football (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011).

Alston and Bowles (2003) add to the importance of building rapport by emphasising the need to demonstrate empathy in establishing a relationship. Once this is achieved the participant is more likely to openly express their inner thoughts and feelings. As part of this process it is important that the interviewer acknowledge personal characteristics in the building of each relationship and be aware of how this may impact upon the interviewee and the interview itself.

After the initial conversation, I advised the participant what would be the first question so that they could get themselves settled and clearly thinking about their responses. The first question always related to their name, address, date and place of birth, followed by a breakdown of their family. The next question asked about the how, when and why they got involved with women's football. As pointed out above, I began the study with a semi-structured set of questions based on Barbara Cox's thesis, which I amended to suit my research. As I progressed I let the interview take its own course after the initial few opening questions. This approach suited the interviewees as it allowed the conversation to flow and often led to stories and experiences being recalled which may not have arisen if I had maintained a more structured approach.

My first interview was held on the 19th June 2012 in my hometown of Lennox Head NSW. A friend in town had met a former Matilda who had just relocated to Lennox Head and knowing my interest in the subject provided me with her contact details.

Fourteen potential participants had been identified for interviewing in Melbourne. Out of those initial fourteen, I was able to contact and reach an agreement for an interview with nine. The others were either away on leave, unable to return my calls or their contact details had changed. All of the nine initial interviews were carried out in metropolitan Melbourne.

Interviews were held in Melbourne from the 19th July 2012 with others from the far north coast of NSW, Brisbane and the Gold Coast following over the following twelve months. In addition two telephone interviews were held using Skype with interviewees from Canberra and Sydney. The interviews were undertaken in blocks and upon individual arrangement. The scale of distance involved did not lend itself to regular weekly or monthly time schedules. The interview sessions differed in length of time but most took between fifty and sixty minutes.

The interview process took a total of fourteen months – beginning on the 19th June 2012 and concluding on 26th August 2013.

Once recorded, the interviews were downloaded directly onto my laptop computer which is password protected, with a backup provided for on an external hard drive device kept in a locked cabinet. The only people who had access to the interviews apart from the initial transcribers were my supervisors and myself.

There was only one occasion in which the interview process may have caused some feelings of concern for the interviewee. This participant had represented her country for several years. In recalling some of those memories it became clear that they were not all fond. The interviewee said that these were not issues she enjoyed talking about. At this point I advised

her that she should discuss only what she felt comfortable with and I gave her the opportunity to withdraw from the interview. After some discussion of her discomfort, she was happy to continue.

At the end of each interview I gave each participant an opportunity to add anything that they had either omitted or thought was of importance to them. I again impressed upon them that I was interested in hearing any stories that they wished to share about their lives and football. After the recorder was turned off I would then explain the process from this point forward, and that I would contact them again as soon as the transcription had been completed. They would then be provided with a copy to review, on which they could make changes. After each interview I would engage in informal conversation and thanked them sincerely for their time and contribution. Often we would chat about football in general or about other things such as family, work or local issues. Paul Thompson (1988) states that the interviewer should not rush away after an interview: 'You need to stay, to give a little of yourself, and show warmth and appreciation in return for what has been given to you' (Thompson 1988, p, 211).

During some of these moments the interviewees would feel much more relaxed and additional stories would begin to flow. There were several occasions in which I asked an interviewee if I could include the story we were sharing as an addendum to the actual transcript. During this post-recording period some interviewees felt more comfortable about discussing issues such as sexuality and the more troublesome aspects of their football experience.

Transcription process

The spoken word can very easily be mutilated when it is taken down in writing and transferred to the written page. (Samuel 1972, p.19)

Expert confidential transcription of the interviews was arranged in order to guarantee that the utmost care was taken to ensure that the interviews were transcribed without violating their original integrity. In order to keep the transcriptions true to the original interview all were transcribed verbatim. They

included 'grammatically incorrect manners of speaking including false starts, uhms, you knows' (Leavy 2011, p.49).

Once the drafts were returned to me, each was reviewed in detail before being forwarded to the respective interviewee for further review, amendment if required and final approval. At this point some transcriptions were edited to correct transcription errors. I am aware that editing the transcriptions, however minor, may create some ethical issues surrounding the ownership of the documents. The editing was restricted to minor grammatical and transcription errors and all due care was taken to ensure that the essence of the interview was preserved. All participants are the owners of their respective interviews and had final approval of the transcript prior to inclusion into the thesis. After each interview I recorded in written memo form my thoughts about how the interview went and any points of interest I thought relevant, such as, whether the interviewee was nervous, confident or shy and any issue I thought important. The transcription also noted periods of laughter when they occurred throughout the interview.

All care was taken to ensure that the interviews based on the memories and reminiscences of the interviewees were respected by attempting to catch not only the spoken word but also the many emotional nuances of the interview.

Limitations

A number of limitations were associated with the undertaking of this research. First, the initial concept was to undertake a history of women's football Australia wide. The scope of the project became too large due to the distances and associated costs involved. A compromise was reached whereby the project was restricted to the eastern states of Australia.

While every effort was made to interview women and men who represented a wide cross-section of those involved in all areas of the game, there were some potential participants I was unable to include in the project. Notable omissions include recent Matilda and leading advocate for women's football (Melissa Barbieri) and prominent women's football administrator and former Matilda

(Moya Dodd). Both were unavailable due to work and travel commitments. Several other potential participants provided to me (including former Matildas, administrators, referees and coaches) were also unavailable due to conflicting arrangements, work, family or holiday plans.

In the process of interviewing the participants the issue of sexuality was not widely discussed. While the issue was raised on several occasions, it was either during a period when the tape recorder was turned off or as part of discussions held outside of the interview itself. On one occasion a participant asked me not to include her comments on sexuality in the project.

Data analysis

‘Once the interviews have been transcribed, it is now time to move towards data analysis’ (Leavy 2011). There is no one right way to go about analysing qualitative data (Alston and Bowles 2012, Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011). The procedures used by qualitative researchers are more subjective than those used by quantitative researchers. ‘Thus, qualitative data analysis is about interpretation rather than mathematics. It is about finding the meanings that people ascribe to their experiences’ (Alston and Bowles 2012, p.203).

‘In general, analysing qualitative data requires three things’ (Leavy 2011, p. 58). First, the researcher must immerse him or herself in the data by reading the transcripts, sometimes repeatedly and re-listening to the recorded interviews if necessary. During this stage the researcher ‘gets to know the data’ (Leavy 2011) and different patterns and the beginning of different themes emerge. After the interviews were transcribed and approved by the participants I re-read them individually and began to note down emerging themes and points of interest. These notes were entered into my research diary. I cross referenced these with notes that I had taken at the time of interview, particularly how the interview went as a whole, the mood or emotional tone of the person being interviewed and any issue that I thought important at the time. I then compiled a draft set of memos on all of the interviews in order to record in writing the major themes that emerged from the interviews.

Memos are separate analytical notes that the researcher makes to help think theoretically about their findings: notes that record theoretical questions, concepts, hypotheses, summaries of codes, insights, clues for further data collection, etc. (Alston and Bowles 2012, p.208)

The next steps in the data analysis process require that the researcher begins coding the material and writing analytical memos (Leavy 2011, Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011). Sarantakos (1993) calls this stage *data organisation*. Information is assembled around certain themes and points.

Coding usually consists of identifying meaningful chunks or segments in your textual data (the interview) and giving each of these a label (code). (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011, p.309)

Leavy (2011) acknowledges that there are many different ways of documenting your memo notes as well as many different ways to code data. Some researchers separate memo writing from coding while others consider that the data analysis process should incorporate both memo writing and coding as concurrent processes.

There is no right way to undertake this process. At this point in the data analysis process my main focus was on memo writing and taking notes. However, throughout the writing of the above memos and the highlighting of emergent themes I began to consider certain code headings that would be appropriate for portions of data already identified.

Leavy (2011) argues, 'generally oral history researchers in the social sciences apply a grounded theory approach, or some version of it, to their data analysis'. The analysis starts with an engagement with the data itself and ends with a theory that is either generated from or grounded in the data (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011). Once the initial codes have been identified, similar codes can be grouped into larger categories or meta-code categories. This process reduces similarly coded data into categories or families because

they share some common characteristic – the beginning of a pattern (Leavy 2011).

Once the researcher has completed the initial coding and categorising of the oral history data an additional analysis of the codes is required. The researcher reflects on the coding process undertaken and reviews all aspects of the research process thus far. The memos compiled earlier begin to take on a more analytical role as the researcher progresses through the project. 'As the research progresses, so memos become more elaborate, analytic and theoretically dense' (Alston and Bowles 2012, p.216). Leavy (2011) goes on to say that the memo can form a bridge from coding to the final write up, and can be written about many different aspects of the data.

While the data analysis process is described piecemeal above, it was occurring concurrently. Alston and Bowles (2012) state that qualitative data analysis usually occurs simultaneously with the data collection phase, in a continuous, cyclical process. Throughout the project I was constantly developing themes, ideas, theory and direction. I wrote notes and memos from the very beginning of my project and have added to them as the research progressed. This has given me a sense of where my research is going: 'in other words, I am beginning to develop meaning, and perhaps build theory out of the data' (Leavy 2011, p.64).

The use of computer software in data analysis

The increasing availability of computer software programs to assist with qualitative research has provided the researcher with an effective means of managing a large amount of data. Alston and Bowles (2003) argue that these programs allow large amounts of data to be managed more effectively by enabling sorting and coding. 'What used to be an arduous chore, involving massive amounts of interviews and observations recorded on paper, has now become streamlined' (Alston and Bowles 2012, p.217).

Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) raise concerns in relation to the use of computer software programs to analyse qualitative data. What potential

interference will the program have in the creative process of the analysis? Will it result in the researcher becoming more isolated from the data?

I chose to use a computer software program (NVivo) to assist me in coding my oral history data due to the large number of transcripts, which needed to be analysed and compared. While I am aware of the concerns raised above, I have used the program only as a tool to assist me in managing my data. At no time did I feel that the process was creatively compromised, or that software was driving the research.

Interpretation

At this point in the data analysis process I started to interpret my data and understand emerging themes or patterns. Because my research is interested in the stories and experiences of the women involved in football, I asked myself some of the following questions. What story or stories are emerging out of the data? How does this person's experience speak to other people's experiences? And what overarching issues about social life flow from this person's experiences and cross over to other people's experiences? Leavy (2011).

By addressing these questions you can interpret your data, and thereby link the experiences of individuals to social processes, social circumstances and sociohistorical context. (Leavy 2011, p.66)

Paul Thompson (2000) claims that if you want to argue for a historical interpretation, or you prefer to approach history through biography or a wider social analysis, oral history can be best put together as a collection of stories. 'It also allows the stories to be used much more easily in constructing a broader historical interpretation, by grouping them as a whole or fragmented-around common themes' (Thompson 2000, p. 270).

Linda Shopes (2013) argues that the way historians thought about and interpreted their work took on a gradual shift towards the end of the twentieth century. Researchers began to focus less on the content of what the narrator

had said and more on the meaning embedded in or lying beneath the words. 'Interpreting oral history as narrative means looking for underlying patterns of meaning within the interview' (2013, p.135). The interview then became not only a simple recording of facts but also a more theoretical search for meaning that actively negotiated within the dynamics of the interview exchange (Shopes 2013). Theoretical approaches to the interpretation of oral history began to include a fuller understanding of the meaning of silences in an interview (Passerini 1980, 1987), selective experiences of interview participants through language, and the personal understandings of their pasts (Shopes 2013).

Once the interview transcripts had been coded, I created four overarching categories or mega themes. These were: The love of the game; The road to acknowledgement and respect; Overcoming the hardships; and Meanings of participation. I then reviewed the coded qualitative transcription data and selected representative transcript excerpts and placed them into the relevant mega theme category. The excerpts represented participants' understanding of their past in relation to the major themes which emerged throughout the project. As described above, this was an ongoing process and one I developed and fine-tuned as I moved through the data collection and analysis stages of my research project. I was then in a position to make meaning out of the transcript excerpts by presenting the data and discussing it simultaneously within a major theme or category. (Leavy 2011)

The oral history narrative conveys a broader ideological understanding of the participant's personal pasts. Oral history narratives thus connect the individual and the social (Shopes 2013).

Understood in this way, interviews are not documents in the traditional sense, to be mined for facts, but texts, to be interpreted for ways narrators understand – and want others to understand – their lives, their place in history, the way history works. (Shopes 2013, p.134)

The following chapter (Chapter four) provides a history of the women's game in Australia and introduces the women (and men) participants into the narrative of the history of the women's game. Chapters five through to nine discuss the women's experiences in football across the major theme headings (as listed above). Chapter ten is the final and concluding chapter of the thesis and discusses the outcomes of the research and identifies other topics that would benefit from further research.

CHAPTER FOUR

History of the Women's Game in Australia

This chapter places the individual journeys of the women (and men) who were interviewed for this research project into the history of the game. The chapter provides a chronological history of the women's game in Australia and introduces the women and men who were interviewed for this research. By placing the interviewees into the narrative of the history of the game in Australia, the chapter highlights the themes that emerge from the women and men's experiences as participants in the game. These themes will be discussed in greater detail in part three of the thesis.

Introduction

In June 2015 the Matildas will be taking part in their first group match of the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup (WWC) in Canada. The tournament will mark the sixth appearance of the Australian Women's national team in the WWC, first sponsored by FIFA in 1991. The Matildas have previously reached the quarterfinals of both the 2007 WWC in China and the 2011 WWC in Germany. They are expected to go even further in 2015. This level of sporting success has not come easily. Women's football in Australia has for many years remained hidden behind the men's game and their story remains untold.

The history of the women's game in Australia presented in this chapter is based on the oral testimony of the women and men who were involved in the establishment, growth and development of the game over the past forty years, as well as published accounts and documentary evidence.

In the beginning

It is difficult to isolate the exact moment when women began to play association football, as defined by the Football Association (FA) Laws of the Game in 1863, in Australia. Research undertaken by Roy Hay and Bill Murray in *A History of Football in Australia: A Game of Two Halves*, published in 2014, suggests that there are references to the origins of women's football in

Australia dating back to at least the 1880s (Hay and Murray 2014, p. 267). Archival research in relation to the history of women's football in Australia is still in its infancy and such references are currently being verified.

Hay and Murray (2014) argue that references to the women's game began to intensify in the early decades of the twentieth century. Prior to The First World War (WWI), games were reported in New South Wales (NSW) with women's football teams being formed in Parramatta in 1903 and Candelo in 1908. Women played football in West Wallsend in 1916 during WWI. Games were reported in the immediate post-war period in both NSW and Queensland (QLD). Women were becoming more involved in football and games were reported in: Toowoomba and Brisbane (QLD) in 1921; in NSW, in the Maitland District in 1928; Speer's Point 1929; Corrimal 1930; and a Women's Soccer Football Association was formed at a meeting in Lithgow in 1931 (Hay and Murray 2014).

In September 1921 the *Worker* in Brisbane, *Argus* in Melbourne and the *Register* in Adelaide all reported on a record crowd of about 10,000 who witnessed a ladies soccer match on the Brisbane Cricket ground between North and South Brisbane (Hay and Murray 2014). In 1929 it was reported that a paying audience of 7,000 saw Speer's Point defeat Weston one nil to win the NSW State title under floodlights at the Sydney Sports Ground.

Women were taking tentative steps into the male dominated sport of football in Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a period in which principles of the stringent Victorian period remained in force (Downes, Syson and Hay 2015). Women's desire to be involved in sport (and male-dominated sport in particular) met with opposition from ruling authorities. The medical profession claimed contact sport as potentially harmful to women. Others believed that the desire of women to play sport was a push for social change and equality, all of which were unacceptable to the ruling male authority at the time (Hay and Murray 2014). Women's involvement in sport was either denied, or redirected to such male-approved and more appropriate sports such as tennis.

Concurrent with the beginnings of the game in Australia, women's football was being played in England and Europe. Women in Australia began to read about women overseas breaking down barriers and playing regularly and successfully (Hay and Murray 2014, p.269). Particular reference was made to the achievements of the Dick, Kerr's Preston Ladies football team in England (Hay and Murray 2014). During WWI women's football teams were formed to raise funds for charities and the war effort, with the Dick, Kerr's Preston Ladies team emerging as the most successful. The team achieved international recognition for its successes both on and off the field, attracting large crowds and raising over £175,000 for charity (Newsham 1997). Women in Australia were being informed of women in England playing a male contact sport with no ill effects. While the men were away in Europe fighting in the War these women were free to explore the opportunities made available to them and in doing so were contributing to the disintegration of Victorian principles.

..[W]omen's attitudes to their place in society were beginning to change – they were 'coming out of the kitchen' and wanted to contribute more to the order of things. Women wanted to work, they wanted to vote and they wanted to play, and they were no longer prepared to accept that they were inferior to the male population. (Newsham 1997, p.1)

Those opposed to women's football continued to gather medical opinion, which supported the English Football Association (FA) argument that it was dangerous for women to play contact sport. Increasing numbers of spectators at the women's games added to a growing fear among male football authorities that the success of the women's game was having a detrimental effect on the men's game. When provided with allegations that money raised at matches was being inappropriately distributed and that too much of the takings were allocated to the expenses of the women players, the English Football Association (FA) in 1921 decided to ban women from playing on all member club grounds. The FA stated that as a result of complaints being made it requested all clubs belonging to the Association to refuse the use of

their grounds for women's matches. The FA argued the game was totally unsuitable for women, that complaints had been received about the conditions under which some of these matches had been played and concerns about the appropriation of receipts to other than charitable objects (Newsham 1997).

While this was to have a major impact on the growth of the women's game in the UK (Newsham 1997), there is no evidence to suggest that it had any significant effect on the development of the women's game in Australia. The decision of the FA, widely reported in Australia at that time (Hay and Murray 2014) only added to the home grown level of discrimination being experienced by women who wished to play football. A decade later the same argument used by the FA was used to deter women from playing rugby league in NSW, delivering the code a severe blow (Hay and Murray 2014). However despite the level of 'male scorn and sometimes active opposition, women kept coming back to play the game in various parts of Australia' (Hay and Murray 2014, p.269).

In 1944 towards the end of The Second World War (WWII) the Sydney Sports Ground hosted a women's game, which was shown by the Pathe newsreels (British Pathe was one of the leading producers of newsreels and documentaries during the twentieth century) (Williams 2007, p.165).

After WWII a rise in immigration levels assisted with a resurgence of both the men and women's game. Numbers of women playing began to increase steadily throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s with most associated with the eastern states, in particular, New South Wales. Elaine Watson, Vice-President of AWSA and National team manager in 1976 claims that the estimated player strength at that time consisted of 252 senior teams with around 4,500 players nationally, and 14,500 juniors, of which 9000 came from New South Wales (Watson 1994, P.14).

The women's game became firmly established in Australia in the late 1960s. The 1970s is now recognised as the decade in which women's football began

to take a foothold in the sporting culture of nations world wide, including England, USA, France, and Norway (Williams 2007, Magee et al 2007). Jean Williams (2007) provides an example of the women's game in England:

The most significant pattern for participation is that in one decade the number of clubs affiliated with the Women's Football Association (WFA) increased six fold from 44 clubs in 1969 to 300 clubs with 6,000 players in 1979. (Williams 2007, p.144)

The role of the supporting male in the rise of the women's game in Australia is often ignored. While most men did not realise that women were becoming involved in football, those women who began playing at a young age required male assistance to access a sport considered inappropriate for girls. The majority of these young women were introduced to the game by a male member of the family (usually a brother or father) or male friend. With the assistance of male support, these women were able to negotiate a space for themselves within the male dominated game. Males supportive of the women's game increasingly took on roles as coaches, referees and administrators. The support of family, friends and male footballing peers was also important in enabling many girls to continue playing the game and to feel accepted. Louisa Bisby, a former player in the semi-professional W-League and one of the interview participants in the research, firmly believes that if not for family, friends and the community women would not play football (Downes, Syson and Hay 2015):

That's the difference. Again it's the family and the community, which is the biggest influence on whether a female plays football and continues to play. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

Mothers involved with the game required additional and ongoing support. Women with young children found it difficult to continue playing the game. If it were not for the support of an accepting partner, family or friends most would find the task too difficult. The added difficulties associated with career choices, work and family commitments and financial demands placed on

women who play sport mean that it is not uncommon for many to leave the game (Downes, Syson and Hay 2015).

Queensland

Elaine Watson first became involved with football in Australia in the early 1970s with an active involvement in refereeing. She was to become the first fully qualified woman referee in Australia. Watson was at that time assistant secretary of the Brisbane Junior Association as both her young boys were playing. In 1974 Brisbane was asked to send a team to the first National championships for women in Sydney, and as it was Association policy to send a member of the executive with each representative team, Watson volunteered to go.

Watson recalls in *Women's Soccer in Queensland: In a League of its Own*, published in 1997 that while there are records of women's soccer in Queensland dating back as far as 1925, regularised competition did not begin until about 1964. In the following ten years, women's soccer was to become firmly established in the Brisbane area and eventually led to the creation of an independent Association following the first national women's championship in 1974. Watson was elected as vice president of AWSA in 1976 and became president in 1978, a position she held for 12 years. Watson is widely recognised as a pioneer of the women's game in Australia and is known for her commitment to improving opportunities for women and the solid foundations she helped lay for the acceptance of women within the game in Australia.

The game continued to develop in metropolitan and regional Queensland. Watson (1997) claims that in 1976 Mackay had eight teams and a playing strength of 100 increasing to 177 in 1997. In 1982 Mackay and Townsville combined to form a North Queensland team for the National championships in Brisbane. Mount Isa the furthest outpost of women's football in Queensland also had eight teams in 1976. In the same year Rockhampton had player strength of 150 and by 1997 the local competition supported ten teams. The Sunshine Coast holds the distinction of being the first district to administer all

three men's, women's and junior football, and by 2002 Cairns was home to a twelve-team competition.

Victoria

The increase in immigration post WWII saw a number of families migrating to Australia from the UK and Europe. Among these families were children from footballing backgrounds with parents keen to find a new home in Australia. The women's game in Australia owes much to the contribution of these immigrants. Pioneers of the game in Victoria include Betty and Mick Hoar who emigrated from England in 1970. Hoar had been a foundation member and player with the Luton Ladies in the late 1960s. This led to her being asked to start another women's team in Victoria. In 1974 the Greensborough Ladies were to become one of only four women's teams in the inaugural women's competition joining Green Gully, Dandenong City and Doveton. It was later the same year that the first national championships were held in Sydney. Along with her husband, Hoar became a life long supporter of the women's game in Australia as a player, manager and administrator. Betty Hoar is recognised as a pioneer of the game in Victoria and one of a small group of people who helped establish women's football in Victoria and Australia in the 1970s. Hoar was awarded life membership of the FFV in 2009.

Theresa Deas (nee Jones) migrated to Australia from Wales in the early 1970s. The family settled in Dandenong, Melbourne. Deas' father had previously played for Newport in South Wales, and was keen to become involved with a football club in Victoria. The family connected with the Dandenong City football club where her father coached her brother's team and Theresa joined the club's inaugural women's team at the age of twelve. Dandenong City joined the other three clubs in Victoria's initial women's competition in 1974. Deas' talent was recognised and she was selected for National representation as a teenager and played for Australia for ten years, playing eighteen A-Internationals. Deas has been a strong advocate for the support, promotion and equality of women in football throughout her career. She is particularly passionate about the recognition of the pioneers in the game and acknowledgement of the long and difficult work undertaken by

those who developed the game in Victoria and Australia. Deas was awarded the Australian Sports Medal in 2000 and inducted into the FFA Hall of Fame in 2003. Deas remains involved as a member of the FFV Women's Standing Committee and awarded life membership of the FFV in 2014.

In the 1970s the women's game progressed and participation grew in Victoria, as evidenced by the addition of women's teams from both existing male clubs and independently (Dandenong North, Waverley, Berwick City and Cranbourne Casey). Individual State leagues continued on after the beginning of the National Championships and by 1974 the Victorian State league had been split into western and eastern divisions. Both divisions ran from 1974 to 1984. The Victorian Women's Premier League was instituted in 1992. In 1999 the Victorian Soccer Federation (VSF) administered 62 women's teams in official league competitions. Box Hill Inter has been the most consistently successful side, since the beginning of the Premier League, only failing to win one premiership between 2003 and 2010 (Hay and Murray 2014). In 2014 South Melbourne WFC became both the league champions and grand final winners.

While the game expanded there remained many obstacles to its ongoing development. Women involved in the game from the 1970s through to the 1990s in Australia were subject to a lack of resources and support. Women's football grew despite a lack of financial support, little media attention and an absence of recognition of their participation in the game. Women and girls were openly discouraged from playing by male-dominated institutions and were routinely restricted to canteen duties or washing strips. Women attempting to break into the roles of coaching and refereeing often experienced sexual discrimination. And those that played dealt with discriminatory decisions, which often led to disputes concerning field allocation, availability of suitable dressing rooms, field markings and referee appointments.

Other prominent women involved in the pioneering years of women's football in Victoria include Debbie Nichols who first came to Australia in 1975 at the

age of eleven, when her family emigrated from Germany via the UK. Nichols played school football with the boys in the UK prior to the introduction of the rule that disallowed the interaction of boys and girls in the one team. After arriving at the Enterprise Migrant Hostel in Springvale, Melbourne she heard there was a women's football team in Springvale City. At that time there were no women's junior leagues or age groups available. Nichols played in the open age group at the age of twelve. This was the start of a long and successful career in football both as a player and coach. Nichols made a significant contribution to the development of the women's game. She was selected in the Victorian state squad for twenty years and in the national team to play Brazil in 1988. She played a total of twelve international matches up until 1989.

Maggie Koumi emigrated from England in 1979 at the age of 29. Unlike the women mentioned above, she had no previous connection with football. However, she immediately connected with other newly arrived migrants and joined a women's social football team. Playing socially for about twenty years Koumi hung up her boots at the age of 51. Her work as an administrator made a significant contribution to the development of women and football in Victoria. Koumi joined the Board of Directors for Women's Soccer in 1997 and was involved in the amalgamation of the Victoria Soccer Federation and Women's Soccer Victoria in 1999. While the aim of amalgamation was to provide a more professional and integrated approach to the development of men's and women's football, not all were happy about the process. Some were concerned the hard work done by the many women pioneers of the game would be lost. After the amalgamation, Koumi was invited to stand on the women's committee with FFV. In 2001 she joined the Board of Directors for FFV for a period of six months before retiring. Koumi is now involved in the both the women's and historical advisory committees for FFV.

Other migrant women have made significant contributions to the development of the game in Victoria. Annette Hughes came to Australia from the USA in 1997. As a player, coach and administrator, she fought for the rights of women and girls for equal treatment in the game. Louisa Bisby emigrated

from England in 1995 at the age of fifteen after playing as a junior with Aston Villa. She represented her state, the Victorian W League and the national team throughout the 1990s and the 2000s. Bisby is presently employed as a game development officer for Melbourne City FC. Other pioneers in women's football in Victoria and Australia (not included in this research) include Jacqui Agar, Janette Melvin, Anne and Janine McPhee, Shona Bass and Maria Berry.

Canberra

Canberra became prominent in the history of the women's game in the 1980s when the AWSA established its headquarters there and the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) became a supporter of women's football (Hay and Murray 2014). Heather Reid is the daughter of Scottish migrants who came to Australia in 1955. Reid was introduced to the game by a work colleague in 1977 at the age of 22 and became one of the most influential people in the development of the women's game in Australia. While playing for the Australian National University (ANU) in 1978, Reid and others formed the ACT Women's Soccer Association. As well as maintaining a playing and coaching career, Reid quickly progressed as an administrator and held secretary, vice-president and president positions with the ACT Women's Soccer and as a Board member of the AWSA. After completing a degree in sports management, Reid was appointed as the National Executive Officer of Australian Women's Soccer in 1986. She stayed in that position for seven years. During the 1980s, Weston Creek was the dominant women's team in the league and won ten premierships up until 1993. Canberra Eclipse joined the Women's National Soccer League (WNSL) from 1996 until 2000, and Canberra United took part in the W League in its first season in 2008–09 (Hay and Murray 2014). In 2004 Reid became the first female to be appointed as CEO of a State Football Federation and is currently the CEO of a semi-professional football team, (Canberra United FC) in the national W-League. In 2011–12 Canberra United won the league defeating Brisbane Roar and repeated the result in 2014–15 by defeating frontrunners Perth Glory.

New South Wales

The women's game developed rapidly in NSW from the 1960s. Pat O'Connor migrated from England in 1963 with her family and was involved with the St. George Budapest club in Sydney. O'Connor played for the women's team in the Metropolitan Ladies' Soccer Association (MLSA) league, of which she was a founding member. By 1973 the league had grown to twelve teams and by the 1990s it included a 30-team league, which incorporated clubs from greater Sydney, Newcastle and Bathurst (Hay and Murray 2014). O'Connor joined with Elaine Watson and Frank Clarke from Queensland and Oscar Mate from Western Australia to form the AWSA in 1974. O'Connor was inducted into the FFA Hall of Fame in 2001 for her contributions to the development of women's football in NSW and Australia.

Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania

During the 1970s the women's game was beginning to develop in Western Australia (WA), South Australia (SA) and Tasmania (Tas). Research undertaken by Hay and Murray (2014) provides a record of a women's exhibition game being played at the Margaret River Carnival on 16 August 1946 in Western Australia. It wasn't until 1972 that the first women's league was introduced with six teams and over 500 players. Oscar Mate president of the Western Australia Women's Soccer Association (WAWSA) was elected as the president of the AWSA at its inaugural meeting in 1974 and was instrumental in introducing the first national championships in the same year.

Hay and Murray (2014) reveal that women's games were recorded in South Australia in the 1950s and 1960s. However such reports indicate the games were spasmodic during this time. The women's game did not formally establish a league until 1977. By 1979 nineteen teams took part in a three-division league and the state team entered the national championships for the first time that year (Hay and Murray 2014, p.275).

Little is known about the beginnings of women's football in Tasmania however research undertaken by Chris Hudson, published in 1998, in, *A Century of Soccer: A Tasmanian History*, indicates that the first game was held in 1959.

Tasmania went on to field a women's team in the national championships by 1980 and hosted the first national youth championships in 1985 (Hay and Murray 2014).

The growth of women's football in the 1970s was not restricted to the major state capital cities. Women and girls took an interest in the game across the nation. On the far north coast of NSW Janelle Perry (Nell) was introduced to the game in 1973 by her boyfriend Callan McMillan (they were married in August 1974). Callan was the son of Scottish immigrants who had settled in Australia in 1972. His father, Callan Snr (Pa) was known for his skills back in Scotland and the family's enthusiasm for football provided her with the necessary support to become involved in the inaugural women's competition on the far north coast. The first game was played in Lismore as a trial match and held at a local high school on a Saturday afternoon in the winter of 1973.

The women's competition on the far north coast of NSW officially began in 1974 with only three clubs involved: Goonellabah, Richmond Rovers and Italo Stars. Over the coming years more teams joined and by 1977 the competition had grown to fourteen squads. Some 40 years after the beginning of the women's competition, Football Far North Coast (FFNC) has grown to include 41 teams of senior women's and 30 junior girl's teams with a total of 2070 registered female players.

Perry played on and off until the age of 45. After the tragic death of her husband in 1977, the football community rallied to support the family and the Callan McMillan Shield was presented as a memorial to a pioneer of the game in 1978. The shield has been a major part of the women's competition since its inception and is currently presented to the winning team of the Far North Coast Football women's pre-season competition.

A national game

Elaine Watson argues in *Australian Women's Soccer: The First 20 Years* (1994), that by 1974 regular women's competitions had been established in most states of Australia. However the women players were becoming

dissatisfied with the discriminatory treatment they were receiving from the male-dominated established Associations. The women felt it important to be recognised as serious footballers and that their sport be afforded credibility. During 1974 Oscar Mate from WA and Pat O'Connor from NSW conducted a campaign to gain a nationwide commitment for a national championship and a national women's association (Watson 1994).

The AWSA was elected at the inaugural national football championships for women in 1974. The competition was held in Sydney with five states taking part. The teams were not true representative state teams at that time with the St. George club forming the majority of the NSW team, Morley Windmills forming the basis of the WA team and a Greensborough/Melton combination playing for Victoria. Macquarie and Districts represented Northern NSW and Brisbane Junior Soccer Association for Queensland. NSW were the inaugural national champions defeating Northern NSW in the final.

Towards the end of the competition team officials met to discuss the establishment of an organisation to promote, foster and manage women's soccer in Australia (Watson 1994). Oscar Mate from WA was elected President and Pat O'Connor from NSW as Secretary. Frank Clark from Queensland was elected as vice-president and Jacqui Ager from Victoria as treasurer. Frank Clark later declined the position due to work commitments and nominated Elaine Watson from Queensland to be the first vice-president. This was to be the beginning of Watson's twenty-year commitment to AWSA.

In 1975 AWSA granted the national champions (NSW) approval to compete in the Asian Cup, which was to be held in Hong Kong in August that year. At the same meeting AWSA resolved to affiliate with the Asian Ladies Football Confederation (ALFC). Watson (1994) claims that when the NSW team arrived in Hong Kong they were widely reported as the 'Australian' team. The Australian press, due to a lack of knowledge about women's football, adopted the reference and the players were seen as Australian representatives long before a national team was formally selected. The confusion caused by the reported misrepresentation was not resolved until the selection of a national

women's team to compete in the first World Women's Invitational Tournament to be held in Taipei, Taiwan in 1978.

National championships were held annually, hosted by a different state each year. By 1981 the national women's championships had expanded to include up to nine states and territories and a youth championship was introduced in 1985.

In 1985 a grant application to the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) for assistance with the appointment of a National Executive Director (NED) was successful in obtaining \$25,000. Keith Gilmour was appointed as the first NED of AWSA. Heather Reid from the ACT followed after the resignation of Gilmour in 1986 and stayed in that position for seven years. In the 1980s Reid helped lobby for the establishment of a FIFA World Cup for women and for women's competition to be added to the Olympic games football program. In 1992 Paul Turner former AIS soccer scholarship holder, administrator and high-school teacher was appointed to the position. Turner was in the position during the years in which women's football was added to the Olympic games and Australia was in the process of trying to qualify for the 1995 Women's World Cup, after failing to qualify for the inaugural event in 1991.

In 1985 the AWSA headquarters were moved to Canberra to facilitate interaction with the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS), which was beginning to take a greater interest in the promotion of women and girls' participation in soccer. In the early 1990s, the ASC in an attempt to promote gender equity, initiated a grant specifically to assist a working party aimed at improving the relationship between the Australian Soccer Federation (ASF) and AWSA. The simplistic view being if the AWSA was amalgamated with the ASF any problems between the two would be resolved. Members of the AWSA were conflicted between maintaining a single focus on the development of the women's game and the potential benefits for future development under the authority of the ASF. In 1992 FIFA held a major international symposium on the development of the women's game. It pledged support for the participation of women and girls in soccer and guaranteed the continuation of the Women's

World Cup. This announcement further reinforced a need for the AWSA to develop a working relationship with the ASF, which held FIFA membership and controlled nominations for entry into World Cup competitions (Watson 1994).

In 1990 the ASF-commissioned Bradley report proposed as part of their reorganisation that an AWSA delegate be involved through the proposed development committee – this was seen as an initial step in reconciling differences in philosophies between ASF and AWSA.

In 1996 AWSA established a women's national soccer league (WNSL) originally called the Ansett Australian Summer Series (Hay and Murray 2014). Six teams took part in the competition representing NSW, Northern NSW, South Australia, QLD, Victoria and Western Australia in a two-tier tournament. Although the season was short it provided the women with quality competition and increased their opportunities for selection in the national team. The league continued until the demise of Soccer Australia in 2004 as a result of the government initiated review into the governance of association football in 2003, commonly known as the Crawford Report. The review highlighted in unflattering terms the critical state of association football in Australia, including the failure of the Socceroos to qualify for the World Cup and Confederations Cup and the total mismanagement by the Board of Soccer Australia.

Women in Australia eventually 'reconciled the diverse philosophies of the ASF and AWSA' (Watson 1994) in the late 1990s. In 1999 the VSF, later the FFV, and Women's Soccer Victoria amalgamated and established an integrated structure to provide professional administrative services and infrastructure to all female participants in football in Victoria (Hay and Murray 2014). However some women were cautious and unsure about losing control. Theresa Deas was the Development Officer with Women's Soccer Victoria at the time and recalls the efforts of many women volunteers and the pioneers of the women's game in Victoria. Deas is not convinced that the amalgamation honours those pioneers of the game and the time and effort that went into the formation of the inaugural women's Association.

That we all put in so much time and effort, and they just write it off as if football now started in the year 2000. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

By 2001 there were only four women's associations left belonging to AWSA: QLD, ACT, SA and WA. The Crawford report of 2003 heralded the refinement of the administration of the game and assisted in ending the separate entities, which were the AWSA and Soccer Australia (SA), leading to the creation of an overarching federation (FFA) in 2004 (Hay and Murray 2014).

W-League

The W-League is the leading women's semi-professional football league in Australia in 2015. The FFA established the league in 2008 after the men's A League competition had been introduced in 2005. The league has eight teams, seven of which are very loosely affiliated with the male A League clubs at that time, with the eighth team based in Canberra. The W-League's inaugural season commenced on 25 October 2008 with Perth Glory hosting Sydney in Perth.

Queensland Roar (now known as Brisbane Roar) defeated Canberra in the grand final to take the inaugural champions trophy. In the 2009–10 season Sydney were both premiers and champions; in 2010–11 it was the turn of Sydney and Brisbane Roar; and in 2011–12 Canberra were premiers and defeated Brisbane Roar to become champions. The 2012–13 competition decider was between Sydney FC and Melbourne Victory with Sydney winning its second W League title 3 goals to 1. The 2013–14 grand final was held between Melbourne Victory and Brisbane Roar with Victory making club history by winning their first W-League title 2 goals to nil (Hay and Murray 2014). In the 2014–15 decider, Perth Glory were defeated by Canberra 3–1 in a major upset after the Perth side had won the premiership by ten points and were clear favourites to take the title.

While the W-League is held in high regard by many, women close to the game believe women's football at the elite level needs to be given the respect

it deserves. They argue that the W-League should be treated equally with the men's game and other national sporting bodies by developing a complete and competitive national competition. Many believe that the current format is not a true league, with eight teams playing only twelve rounds. Some are disappointed that the FFA has not gone to a full home-and-away season for the W-League. FFA often argues that this decision is based on financial resources. Some still think it unfair and it is hard to accept that this decision is not derived from a level of discrimination against the women's game (Downes, Syson and Hay 2015).

Belinda Wilson, a leading coach in the W-League believes that one of the biggest challenges facing the development of the women's game in Australia is achieving equal respect for the national women's competition.

If you're going to do something for the women, have a bit of respect for it and treat it as you would any other competition. (Belinda Wilson 12/2/13)

While the W-League is not on an equal playing field with the men's competition, the short W-League season has its advantages. The long off-season allows for overseas experience and income for a small number of elite players who join USA, European and Asian leagues. Players such as Lisa De Vanna (Washington Spirit), Stephanie Catley (Portland Thorns), Emily Van Egmond (Chicago Red Stars), Caitlin Foord (Sky Blue FC, New Jersey), Caitlin Friend (Notts County) and Clare Polkinghorne (INAC Kobe, Japan) have recently taken advantage of this opportunity. Prior to the commencement of the W-League, elite players were required to travel overseas to gain experience and to earn a living with semi-professional clubs in Europe and Asia.

Louisa Bisby, a former international for Australia played for Schaun, Chengdu in China in 2002 and spent an extended period with FFC Brauweiler Pulheim in the German Bundesliga from 2004 to 2006.

In China, they treated the women like they would treat men. There was a lot of support. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

The summer football season in Australia attracts elite players from overseas. In 2013 Nadine Angerer, the German national goalkeeper and World Player of the Year, was contracted to play with Brisbane Roar and Jessica Fishlock, captain of the Welsh national team who has also played in the USA and Germany, was on short-term contract with Melbourne Victory.

The W-League was covered on live television by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) until Federal Government cuts to funding in 2014 resulted in the broadcaster announcing that the coverage would cease after the completion of the 2014–15 season. Women's sport in general has long endured a lack of media attention and the women's game is one of many sports under represented on mainstream media. The decision of the ABC to cut coverage of the W-League is seen by many supporters of the women's game as a major setback to its growth and development in Australia. Sharon Young, a former international, feels that media support is essential for the growth and recognition of the women's game;

That's the biggest challenge, we need to get it out there to be promoted and people actually see it and go wow these girls can play. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

The FFA in reply to the decision of the ABC has publicly supported the continuation of the W-League and is investigating alternative avenues of media support for the league.

Australia in the international spotlight

Australia's first involvement in international competition began with an invitation to compete in the Asian Cup in August 1975, held in Hong Kong (Williams 2007). The AWSA had been inaugurated the year before and the winner of the first national competition held in 1974, New South Wales was given permission to attend. While the NSW team was not a true Australian representative team, it was recognised as such by local and international

media at the time. The competition provided Australian women football players with their first international experience.

While Australia was not active in the international scene in the mid 1970s, the ALFC and European countries were beginning to push FIFA for the introduction of a World Cup for women. AWSA received a notification that a World Cup for women was proposed for Hong Kong in July 1976. Although the national competition was rescheduled and a team and management-staff selected, the World Cup announcement proved to be unfounded and became one of many false starts until FIFA sponsored the first official Women's World Cup in 1991 (Watson 1994, Williams 2007).

In 1997 Pat O'Connor the Secretary of the AWSA made an attempt to organise the international women's game against New Zealand as a curtain raiser to the world cup qualifier between the men's teams at the Sydney Cricket Ground. The request was denied (Hay and Murray 2014).

After many failed attempts and postponements, an Australian team entered its first international competition in 1978 at the World Women's Invitational Tournament in Taipei, Taiwan (Hay and Murray 2014). Watson (1994) claims that it seemed that the team would have to withdraw as a result of the Federal Government refusing to provide financial support for any team associated with either Taiwan or South Africa due to the political situation in those countries. In order to get the tournament established the Republic of China Football Association (ROCFA) agreed to meet the cost of international travel and all internal costs for competing nations (Watson 1994). In the end the players were only required to pay for domestic airfares and uniforms. This level of support was short lived, as future Australian representatives were required to fund all related expenses. Australia was the only national team in the tournament, with the other twelve nations being represented by clubs or district teams.

The final in Taipei was played in front of 35,000 fans while the local armed forces were required to prevent a further 10,000 supporters from crashing

through the ground gates. France (Stade de Reims) and Finland (HJK) finished equal winners from Taiwan (I-Neng) and USA (Sting) (Watson 1994, p.19).

The first international women's competition to be officially recognised took place in 1979 (Hay and Murray 2014). New Zealand agreed to compete in a three test series in Sydney and Brisbane and the Trans-Tasman Trophy kicked off in October 1979. After a 2-2 draw in the opening match and a win to both New Zealand and Australia, the series ended in a draw. The Australian team toured New Zealand in 1980 to compete in the return Trans-Tasman Trophy series. Australia won the trophy after two draws and a 3-2 win in Christchurch. Theresa Deas (then Jones) from Victoria was added to the Australian team for the first time and held her position as goalkeeper for the national team for the following ten years. The winners of the test series were awarded the Rose Bowl Trophy, which had been organised through the South Australian Association and donated by Medibank (Watson 1994).

In the same year the AWSA decided not to re-affiliate with the ALFC due to conditions imposed by the amended constitution, which would place harsh financial restrictions on AWSA. In 1981 the Republic of China Football Association invited New Zealand to compete in the second Women's World Invitational Tournament as the Oceania representative. Australia subsequently embarked on a three test provincial tour of New Zealand to aid in their preparation for the upcoming tournament in Taiwan. New Zealand initiated moves to form a Women's Oceania Confederation and meetings were held in New Zealand with representatives from Australia, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea and Fiji (Watson 1994).

In the late 1970s AWSA had been raising issues of concern over the treatment of women wishing to undertake coaching courses (Williams 2007). Individual applications were being refused on the grounds that FIFA regulations stipulated that women could not compete against men in match conditions. According to Watson (1994), this meant that sufficient women applicants were needed in order to form a separate course before the

nominations could be accepted. While AWSA argued that coaching courses were educational and did not reflect actual match conditions, the ASF refused to accept nominations. This situation began to improve in the 1980s after FIFA announced that it had no objection to co-educational coaching courses and nominations began to be accepted in a number of states.

Attitudes were slow to change in relation to women being involved in leadership roles. Women were afforded limited access to the male dominated roles of coaching and refereeing. While the level of opportunity has increased, discrimination is still prevalent in coach education today. Women report that they are still not made welcome. The movement of women into leadership and decision-making roles such as coaching is seen as a significant challenge to the male dominance of the sport. Women continue to face intimidation and abuse in a system that promotes inequality and reinforces the idea that coaching is still a solely male domain.

Nicky Leitch is a former Australian representative. She is highly qualified as a coach, with an equivalent FFA B Licence accreditation and experience in coaching women's and boys' representative teams at the State and international level. The lack of a suitable pathway for women and the level of discrimination made it very difficult for her to work as a coach;

The coaching pathways, I mean look I'd love to say a female could coach an A League team because really a female could coach an A League team but community perception would never accept that and they would never even give them, I don't believe an opportunity to a female even in an assistant's role. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

Oceania Women's Confederation

The inaugural meeting of the Oceania Women's Football Confederation (OWFC) was held in October 1982. The first Oceania Cup organised by the body was played in Noumea, New Caledonia in November and December that year with teams competing from Australia, New Zealand, New Caledonia and Fiji. New Zealand was the eventual winner of the Cup, defeating Australia in the final (Williams 2007).

During this year the United States Soccer Federation began seeking support from countries involved in women's soccer to include a women's competition in the Olympic games in Los Angeles in 1984. It was not until 1996 that women's football was added to the Olympic games program for the Games in Atlanta.

Australia accepted invitations to compete in Taiwan and China in 1984. In 1986 the second Oceania Cup was staged in Christchurch, New Zealand and the fourth Women's World Invitational Tournament was held in Taiwan in 1987. At that time discussions were still being held in relation to the establishment of a Women's World Cup. However FIFA again postponed the inaugural competition to late 1988 or early 1989 and changed the venue to southern China (Watson 1994).

Australia attended the pilot World Cup in China in 1988. Debbie Nichols joined Theresa Jones as part of the Victorian contingent in the Australian team. Australia defeated Brazil in its opening game but were defeated by China in the quarterfinal.

Australia hosted its first international series when the third Oceania Cup was held in Brisbane in 1989. Dalys Carmody from NSW was selected to play for the Australian Green team in her only appearance for the national team. Neither of the Australian teams performed well, with losses to New Zealand and Chinese Taipei, after drawing with each other in the opening round.

Australia was invited by the Japanese Football Association (JFA) to compete in a combined test and provincial tour in that same year. Australia finished the tour undefeated drawing both tests and winning the two provincial games (Watson 1994).

Throughout the 1980s the Australian team competed in over twenty A-internationals in Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, China, Japan and New Caledonia, including three Oceania Cups.

The Women's World Cup

FIFA finally confirmed that the first Women's World Cup would be held in China in 1991. As Oceania had only been allocated one position, Australia would have to compete with New Zealand for the honour of attending. As a lead up to the World Cup qualifying tournament Australia hosted a three-match series against the Swedish champions Malmö. Australia was successful in the first game but was defeated in the last two. The series was followed by the qualifying tournament for Oceania's one representative spot for entry into the first FIFA Women's World Cup. The competition was held in Sydney with competing teams Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea (PNG). Sharon Young from Sydney played her first game for Australia in this series, and remembers the bitter disappointment of missing out on qualifying for the first World Cup for women.

I was selected in the 1991 World Cup side, and the disappointment of us not qualifying was heartbreaking. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

After Australia and New Zealand had defeated each other one nil it came down to the results against PNG. Australia was required to defeat Papua New Guinea by 20-0 in order to better New Zealand's first round victory against them of sixteen nil. Australia fell short with a score line of 12-0 and New Zealand won through as the Oceania Confederation's representative at the inaugural Women's World Cup in China in 1991. After that initial disappointment Australia qualified for each World Cup as a member of the Oceania Confederation until 2007 after Australia joined the AFC in 2006.

Following the pilot World Cup in China in 1988, three World Cups were held during the 1990s. After playing in the qualifiers for the first World Cup in 1991, Australia played in the 1995 World Cup in Sweden and the 1999 World Cup in Los Angeles USA. The final of the Women's World Cup in Los Angeles, held in the Rose Bowl, may have seen the largest ever crowd for a women's international at 93,000 (Williams 2007, p.168).

The increasing international schedule during the 1990s meant that the costs of performing at the elite level for Australian women rose sharply. It was not uncommon for women and their families to be responsible for all of the costs. Many of the women involved during the 1970s through to the 1990s were subject to a total lack of financial and material support and it had a dramatic impact on their ability to play. Many stories associated with discrimination come from this time – including the women being issued with ex-Australian men's basketball uniforms! Fundraising and the now famous lamington drives became a necessity for these women to compete and most depended on family, friends and the local community for them to play at this level (Downes, Syson and Hay 2015).

Sharon Young represented her country in the qualification games for the 1991 Women's World Cup,

I think it was only a government grant of about \$100, \$120 a week per player for that 1991 World Cup side and you know, you can't live on that. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

Debbie Nichols who began her international career in 1988 had similar experiences,

When I used to play internationally, we would contribute to our costs and for every state tournament in those twenty years we had to pay for ourselves. If the men went away for an international they certainly wouldn't have paid. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

In 1994 the Australian women's team finished as the top team in the Oceania Confederation and qualified for the second Women's World Cup, which was held in Sweden in 1995. On 11 February 1995 a team of players in the running for selection in the national team played a curtain raiser before the Socceroos friendly against Columbia at the Sydney Football Stadium. In the official program the team was referred to as 'the female Socceroos'. After the match the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) and the AWSA ran a viewer

competition to find a nickname for the national women's team. On the 7 May 1995 the SBS announced that 'Matildas' would be the new name. The new nickname was then regularly used by the media during the 1995 Women's World Cup and is now widely accepted as the moniker that identifies the national women's team (Hay and Murray 2014).

Norway won the 1995 Women's World Cup. The Matildas finished last. The Matildas went on to qualify for the next two Women's World Cups as the top qualifying team in the Oceania Confederation. In 1999 the Women's World Cup was held in the USA after the SARS epidemic required it to be moved from China. The host nation won the event with the Matildas placing eleventh out of sixteen nations. The 2003 Women's World Cup was held in Germany the host nation again won the competition with the Matildas unable to advance, finishing last in their group.

In the lead-up to the 1999 Women's World Cup and the 2000 Olympics the Matildas, in an effort to raise awareness of the game and to offset the costs of national representation, released a nude calendar. While the calendar was highly successful in the short term (in that it caused a stir and generated much publicity), it reinforced the notion that sportswomen could only be interesting if their beauty or sexuality were exploited (Hay and Murray 2014).

Lisa Casagrande from the far north coast of NSW and the youngest member of the Matilda's squad at the time recalls the launch of the calendar,

The ploy of the calendar was any marketing that makes attention is doing its job and that was the intention of the CEO at that time. Let's just put it out there to get us noticed. It did, it did that. (Lisa Casagrande 11/12/12)

The 2007 Women's World Cup was held in Beijing and was the Matildas first representing the AFC. The Matildas qualified after reaching the final of the AFC Women's Asian Cup in Adelaide in 2006 where they were defeated by China after a penalty shootout was held to decide the winner. Australia finished second in Group C behind Norway but lost the quarterfinal to eventual finalists Brazil. A four goal to one win over Ghana in the first match

was the Matildas' first victory at a Women's World Cup and subsequent draws with Norway and Canada saw the team progress to the quarterfinal round. The Matildas pushed Brazil all the way eventually going down three goals to two. Germany were the eventual winners. The women's performance in reaching a World Cup quarterfinal for the first time exceeded anything the equivalent men's team has so far achieved.

The awarding of berths for entry into the Women's World Cup has been historically Eurocentric, with over half the countries represented at earlier tournaments coming from Europe. Entry into the AFC has created greater opportunities for the Matildas to achieve qualification.

The Matildas went one better by winning the 2010 AFC Women's Asian Cup in China by defeating Korea DPR on penalties. After a one-all score line and 120 minutes of play in atrocious weather conditions the Matildas qualified for the 2011 Women's World Cup in Germany. The 2011 Women's World Cup was heralded as a major success for the women's game, with the tournament averaging 26,000 fans per game and generating strong television ratings. The final was held between the USA and Japan and was watched by 14.1 million domestic viewers in the USA and 10.1 million viewers in Japan. Matches involving the host country Germany averaged roughly 16 million viewers, nearly one fifth of the country's population (Hay and Murray 2014). The Matildas again reached the quarterfinals only to lose to Sweden. Japan were the eventual winners defeating the United States in the final.

The seventh FIFA Women's World Cup is to be held in Canada in 2015. In response to the international growth of the women's game FIFA have increased the number of teams eligible for qualification from 16 to 24 and have correspondingly increased the total number of games from 32 to 52. FIFA and Canadian organisers are expecting large spectator attendances with increasing television broadcasting and media support.

The Olympic Games

Worldwide lobbying by thousands of supporters for the inclusion of women's soccer as a full medal event at the Olympic Games was endorsed by a motion carried by the Congress of the United States. These pressures together with FIFA's recognition that the women's game was ready for wider international attention led to the announcement on 19 September 1993 by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) that the 1996 Olympic soccer program in Atlanta USA would include a women's competition. Four days later the IOC announced that Sydney, Australia would host the 2000 Olympic Games (Watson 1994, p.66).

The inaugural Olympic competition was won by the host nation on penalties against China in front of approximately 79,000 fans. Australia did not qualify as only the top eight nations from the previous year's World Cup were accepted. The Australians had finished in twelfth position. The Australian team qualified for the 2000 Olympic Games as host nation and finished in seventh place after a loss to Germany three goals to nil, drawing with Sweden one all and narrowly losing to Brazil in their final game two goals to one. Norway defeated the USA in the final winning the first gold medal for women's football at an Olympic Games. The Australian team qualified for the 2004 games in Athens as the leading nation in the Oceania Confederation. Australia reached the quarterfinals of the tournament after a narrow loss to Brazil one nil, a victory over the host nation Greece one nil and a draw against the USA one all. This was the first time an Australian women's team had reached the quarterfinals of a major international competition.

With Australia's entry into the AFC in 2006, qualification for the Olympic Games was made much more challenging. For the 2008 Olympic Games, China as host and AFC member was granted an automatic spot, and only one other qualification from the AFC remained. The Matildas were unsuccessful in their attempt to defeat Korea DPR and failed to qualify for the 2008 Olympic Games. The Matildas did not qualify for the 2012 Olympic Games in London after again losing to Korea DPR in the qualification rounds. The result proved to be controversial after a number of Korean players had tested positive to

drug tests at the World Cup however the team was allowed to compete at the Games.

International tournaments are now held for both the under-seventeen and under-twenty women. The Young Matildas first took part in the inaugural world cup for under-twenty women in 2002 in Canada. The Australian team performed admirably with a win over Thailand, a loss to the USA and a draw with England. In 2004 the tournament moved to Thailand where the Young Matildas lost all four games. The Young Matildas gained the last spot at the 2006 world cup in Russia by finishing in third place in the AFC behind China and Korea DPR. Australia has since failed to qualify for the 2008 tournament in Chile, the 2010 tournament in Germany and the 2014 World Cup, which was held in Canada. The final was won by Germany in defeating Nigeria to record its third U/20 world cup crown.

The under-seventeens also have their own international competition, which began in 2007. They play Asian championship qualifiers as qualifiers for a biennial under seventeens World Cup. Australia failed to qualify for the 2007, 2009 and 2011 World Cups. The Mini Matildas, as they are now known, again failed to qualify for the 2014 tournament in Costa Rica. They were defeated by China 2-0 in the AFC Championships. Japan defeated Spain in the final. Australia now has in place a pathway for the progression of women and girls playing at the elite level. The men have had a similar system in place since the 1980s (Hay and Murray 2014).

The future of the game

The FFA is improving its support for the development of the women's game in Australia. A major focus of its newly developed Women's Football Strategy is to make football the most played sport for Australian women and girls. The FFA appointed Emma Highwood in 2014 as the Head of Women's Football in a further sign of support for the promotion of the game. Together with FIFA, FFA recently announced the receipt of project funding in the amount of \$536K from FIFA to assist in the development of a National Women and Girls

Football development program to compliment the above Strategy. In 2015 FFA released its 20 year Whole of Football Plan which includes a focus on developing the women's game by working towards a professional W-League competition, bidding for the 2023 WWC, and promoting women in coaching and refereeing. Melbourne City FC has recently confirmed that it will field a women's team for the first time in the W-League 2015/16 season, with former Matilda Louisa Bisby assuming the role of team manager. The game is slowly gaining momentum as it moves toward a more secure future (Downes, Syson and Hay 2015).

While the future of the game is beginning to look much more secure in Australia, traces of traditional and gendered discrimination remain. There are still a number of barriers to equal treatment in the sport: shortage of facilities, lack of qualified coaches, limited media coverage or promotion of female role models, continuing prejudice against women playing football, and cultural expectations in relation to women's participation in sport. While this situation is changing there remains much to be done in order for the game to reach a position where women are treated equally.

Women involved in the game feel strongly about the recognition and acknowledgement of the pioneers of the game. Their stories speak of great achievement and a love of playing the game and a common refrain is, 'You don't do it for the money'. The women advocate strongly for past achievements to be recognised and for those who play the game to be treated equally. Many of these women have achieved great things within the game despite personal hardship, lack of any financial support, gender discrimination and lack of respect. Overcoming the hardships – both tragic and mundane – combined with a love of the game and a determination to succeed enabled these women to create a history of the women's game in Australia.

CHAPTER FIVE

Forgotten Stories: The Women's Experiences of Football

Introduction

The documentation of women's and girls' experiences of football not only provides a very important contribution to our understanding of football as a significant social and cultural practice, it also challenges the idea that football studies is wholly concerned with men's experiences of the game and male academic accounts. (Caudwell 2006, p.423)

The women (and men) who participated in this research were enthusiastic about having an opportunity to tell their stories about what the game of football has meant in their lives. Some of the women were pioneers of the game, some achieved at the highest level and played for their country, while others were involved in coaching and administration and others at the grass roots level of participation.

They all spoke about their love of the game and their passion for participating in it. All spoke of the importance it holds for them in their lives and how the game has played a major role in determining the type of person they have become. The support of family and the encouragement of fathers, husbands and brothers in many of the women's decisions to come to the game is paramount in many of the stories. The support of the local and broader community assisted these women to be involved with a game that has been traditionally played and run by men.

The stories speak of great achievement and satisfaction. The level of joy and happiness the women feel in participating is shared among fellow players and lifelong friendships have formed. For those involved with the game, at all levels, the bonds of friendship, the solidarity of the team environment and the level of respect earned among their peers is something which they all cherish and which is reflected in the comradeship they still share.

The achievement of playing the game and the level of success has been hard earned. These women achieved despite hardship, most of which materialised in the form of sexual discrimination, marginalisation, sexual stereotyping and lack of respect from the wider community and from many of those running the game. This treatment has created a level of bitterness among some of these women and a greater desire to be recognised by many. These women have never been provided with an opportunity for them to share their memories of playing and being involved with the game they love. Many feel they have been cheated. The research provides a welcome opportunity for these women to be heard and for their participation and achievements to be acknowledged.

While there is an ongoing drive by these women for both the game and their achievements to be recognised and for each to be treated equally, the women shared many stories of engagement with the game. These stories are about individual experiences of how these women first came to the game. Some started at a very young age and often played in boys' teams as there were no girls' teams available. Some women played their first game in the home of their birth and continued as a pioneer of the sport once newly settled in Australia, while other women came to the game later in life.

The women's stories often describe the amount of fun they gained from playing. Individual stories about the lack of financial support and of personal hardships are shared, such as the difficulties faced by women who wanted to play or coach but found the barriers too difficult to breach. Often the only way to earn respect from the men was to be a good player and it was this recognition, which helped many to stay with the game.

Overcoming hardships both tragic and everyday combined with a love of the game and a determination to succeed enabled these women to establish the women's game in Australia.

The research findings are discussed under the headings of four major themes being, The Love of the Game, Achievements and Respect, Overcoming the Hardships and Meanings of Participation.

The women (and men) who participated**Louisa Bisby**

Louisa was born in England in 1979 and migrated to Australia in 1995 at the age of fifteen. Louisa has represented both her state and country as a player and has played with Melbourne Victory in the W-League. Louisa has also played semi professional football in both Germany and China, and is currently employed as a football development officer with Melbourne Heart. In the W-League 2015/16 season Louisa will assume the duties of team manager for the new Melbourne City FC women's team.

Vicki Bugden

Vicki was born in 1961 in Newcastle, but moved to Lismore when she turned two. Vicki has a life long involvement with the women's game on the far north coast of NSW and played in the inaugural women's competition in 1973. Vicki was selected to play for NSW and is a life member of the Richmond Rovers Football Club (RR) in Lismore.

Dalys Carmody

Dalys was born in Sydney in the Sutherland Shire in 1964 and began playing the game at the age of seven. Dalys played her junior football with Gympie south of Sydney. Dalys represented both NSW and Australia. Dalys joined the ranks of the Matildas in 1989.

Lisa Casagrande

Lisa was born in Lismore in 1978. Lisa started playing football at the age of six and went on to represent her country 64 times with the Matildas from 1994 to 2002. Lisa was recently named in the Northern NSW women's team of the era. Lisa Casagrande was inducted into the FFA Hall of Fame in 2015.

Theresa Deas

Theresa was born in South Wales in 1963 and migrated to Australia in 1973. Theresa represented Victoria for eighteen years and went onto play for Australia for ten years playing a total of eighteen A-International games.

Theresa was awarded the Australian Sports Medal 2000 Inducted into the FFA Hall of Fame 2003. Theresa is an inspiring representative and advocate for the women's game, and with Betty Hoar is recognised as one of the pioneers of the women's game in Victoria.

Betty Hoar

Betty is recognised as one of the most influential personalities in the development of the women's game in Victoria. Betty was born in England and migrated to Australia in 1970. Betty has been a player, coach, manager and high-level administrator. In 1986 she was awarded life membership of the AWSA, and in 2000 was awarded the Australian Sports Medal and was inducted into the Australian Football Hall of Fame.

Mick Hoar

Mick was born In England and migrated to Australia in 1970. Mick Hoar is the husband of Betty Hoar and has had a life long involvement with the women's game in Victoria in both coaching and management. Mick has played a major role in the development of the women's game in Victoria.

Annette Hughes

Annette was born in Baltimore Maryland in the USA in 1965. Annette migrated to Australia in 1998 and enjoyed a long playing career in the Premier League in Melbourne. Annette was appointed to the FFV Board for a number of years and is a keen advocate for the women's game.

John Hughes

John was born in Liverpool England in 1961 and migrated to Australia in 1965. John is a former player, a coach of women's football and an administrator in women's football in Victoria.

Maggie Koumi

Maggie was born in 1950 in Twickenham, England and migrated to Australia in 1979. Maggie has a long history with the women's game in Victoria and Australia, with twenty years experience as a player and high level

appointments with the Board of Women's Soccer in Victoria, membership on the Women's Football Committee for FFV and a Board member with FFV. Maggie is an advocate for the women's game and is currently involved with the FFV women's and historical committees.

Nicky Leitch

Nicky was born in 1967. Nicky is a former state player with Victoria (1990-98), a former Matilda (1992-94), elite level coach and administrator. Nicky is a champion of the pioneers of the women's game and is still involved today.

Carolyn Monk

Carolyn was born in 1963 and started playing football at the age of seventeen with Wotsonia Park in Melbourne. Carolyn is a former Victorian state representative and was selected to play for the Matildas in 1989. Carolyn is still playing social football today.

Jane Natoli

Jane was born in Melbourne in 1953. Jane became involved with the game due to the involvement of her children and has coached and managed teams at the State level. Jane is currently involved in the management of the Melbourne Victory W-League team.

Debbie Nichols

Debbie was born in Hanover West Germany in 1964 and migrated to Australia in 1975. Debbie has made a long and significant contribution to the women's game as both a player and coach, with 20 years in the Victorian State squad and twelve caps with the Matildas. Debbie has a long history of coaching with both the Casey Comets and Sandringham clubs in Melbourne.

Janelle (Nell) Perry

Nell was born in 1954 in the far north coast town of Lismore. Nell was involved in the creation of the first women's competition on the far north coast of NSW in 1973 and has played for the New South Wales state team.

Heather Reid AM

Heather was born in Goulburn in 1956. Heather has had a very long and successful career in women's football mainly as an administrator, but also as a coach, player and manager of the national team. Heather was a founding member of the ACT Women's Soccer Association in 1978 has held the position of CEO of AWSA and is the current CEO of Capital Football in Canberra. Heather is a leading advocate for the women's game in Australia. Heather was inducted into the FFA Hall of Fame in 2007 and received an AM in 2015.

Helen Thomas

Helen was born in 1961 in Beaudesert, Queensland. Helen started playing the game at the age of twelve and is still playing today at the age of 51. Helen has devoted a large part of her life to football and has played and coached the game at State level.

Paul Turner

Paul has had a long involvement with both men and women's football in the role of a high-level administrator, father and coach. Paul was born in WA and moved to Victoria as the National Executive Director (NED) of AWSA in the early 1990s. Paul also held positions on the Victoria Women's Soccer Association (VWSA) and on the Board of AWSA. Paul's three girls have all played football.

Sharon Young

Sharon was born in 1965 in Sydney. Sharon played for NSW and was selected to play for Australia in the 1991 Women's World Cup qualifying competition. Sharon Young remains a passionate advocate for the women's game and is currently employed as an acting duty manager with the Star Casino.

Elaine Watson OAM

Elaine was born in 1935 in Brisbane and is regarded as one of the major influences in the development and history of the women's game in Australia.

Elaine held many high-ranking positions within the administrative side of women's football including the President of the AWSA and Oceania Women's Soccer Federation (OWSF). Elaine received an OAM in 1993 and was inducted into the FFA Hall of Fame in 1999.

Belinda Wilson

Belinda was born in Sydney in 1975 and moved to Byron Bay at the age of two. Belinda has a long history in coaching and is currently the Brisbane Roar W-League coach and assistant national coach for the U 17 Matildas. Belinda is a very passionate advocate for the development of the women's game.

The Love of the Game

How it all began

Almost all of the participants were introduced to football at a young age. Most of the women began playing when they were between the ages of ten and seventeen, although some were as young as five or six. However there are some who came late to the game and did not start playing until they were 19, 22, 25 and 26 years of age. Two other women who were not directly involved with playing but played a role in administration and or coaching became involved with the game at ages 35 and 45. Regardless of when these women began their football journey, their early encounters generally involved a football and enough space to run and kick within their respective local neighbourhoods. Many of the women have fond memories of their first experiences and the significance of the place in which their journey began:

There are plenty of photos of me as a child with a ball, whether it be a tennis ball, soccer ball at my feet or in my hand. I always remember playing at primary school, in the back garden, kicking the ball against the wall in the park by myself or with the lads from the local estate. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

First known picture of me I am about knee high to a grasshopper with a football in front of me. I think my old man wanted a boy first up and I pretty much grew up with a football from the moment I could walk. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

I started when living on the farm and me old dad would take me around and throw a tennis ball at me, we'd take the dogs for a walk. I didn't have a soccer ball then but then I, as I said we lived in a little village and I'd go up there on the Saturday mornings before they played the game and I'd kick the ball with them and do whatever, that's how long I've been involved. (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

Just being outside every day, they are the biggest memories that I have – running around, every minute of the day. It didn't matter if I was at school, inside doing my homework I had a football at my feet. I would be in the park playing football with the boys until it was pitch black. We would go down to the dairy and kick a ball. No matter what...we always had a football close by. It was just lots of fun. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

Several of the women interviewed were born overseas and migrated to Australia during the 1950s through to the late 1970s. Three are from England, one from Wales, one from West Germany and the other Baltimore, Maryland in the USA. Football for some of these women acted as a type of social integrator particularly for those whose family had moved in order to search for a better standard of life in Australia. Football helped them to adjust to a new life by providing a link to their homeland and a way of integrating with those who enjoyed football in Australia. This reinforces the research undertaken by Mosley (1997) and Rosso (2007) on sporting immigrants and ethnic identification in that 'soccer became extremely popular with a multitude of ethnic groups that settled in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s, and often soccer clubs represented the basis of local community life, companionship, support and identification' (Mosley 1997). Mosley explains that soccer clubs were an important means of community sustainability among the migrant groups in the 1950s and 1960s, enabling social interaction, support links, individual expression and recreation, as well as social recognition within the ethnic group itself (Rosso 2007). The following vignette tells the story of Theresa and her family and the importance of belonging to a football club after settling in Australia and how it influenced her beginning in football:

We came to Australia, the date I don't remember. I was about 9 or 10, with my family, mum and dad, myself and my brother migrated to Australia for work reasons. Mum and Dad came searching for a better life style and we settled in Dandenong. My father who had a great love of sport, and of course with two young children, very soon decided that they wanted to become part of a football club. When we came over here we went to Dandenong City Football Club, which was very local for us, and he didn't play but he started to coach my brother's team. That was basically as soon as we arrived. At the club I got to know a couple of people, it was a very English /Scottish background club, so we had a lot of friends and someone noticed that I was doing ok with the football with the boys and said they were forming a women's team. My dad just said you might as well play you are training with the boys you might as well play, which is what happened and I started off with the Dandenong City Soccer Club Women's team at the ripe old age of twelve. That was the start of my career. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

Other women had similar experiences:

When I came to Australia I was in Springvale in the Enterprise Migrant Hostel. There were fellow Brits and Irish. Someone said, "There is a women's football team down at Springvale City, why don't you go there?" I was only 12 years old. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

Growing up in England, I naturally grew up watching and playing the sport, so I think it was just in the blood. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

I knew a lot of other English people and they basically, a lot of the women were playing in a social team and the minute they saw another pom, that was it, you were told to get a pair of boots, you had to join the team. That is how I got involved. I had never played in my life before that. I never really followed the game in England and I lived around the corner from Stanford Bridge for a long time. I wasn't interested. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

Anyway, we then came to Australia in 1970 and I was expecting, no I'd just had my second child Jason, three and a half months, came over here. In 1972 Mick took up soccer with a club and in 1974 I had a phone call and said Betty we believe you played soccer in England, would you be happy to help start another team?. I said, oh great so this was Greensborough Ladies. So we started Greensborough Ladies and the first year we only had four teams. Green Gulley, Greensborough, Milton and one other and the girl who was more important than me, cause she actually started the women's league in Victoria in 1974 was a girl called Jacqui Ager. And towards August they were going to have their first national championships, Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia and we had our first tournament in Sydney near where the railway crash was, Granville, and the four of us went. (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

Those women who were Australian born came to the game mainly through local clubs, either as a player, coach or administrator. There was very little opportunity for young girls to play football at school both in Australia and overseas during the 1970s. This was an experience which is shared by the majority of the women interviewed. In a comparative cross-country study on

elite female footballers by Scraton et al., (1999) it was reported that at both primary and secondary school most of the English players interviewed were either denied opportunities completely or had to battle hard for them. While there were no legal restrictions to participation on primary school girls competing in football, most of the women were either not allowed to play or had to play with boys to gain an opportunity to participate (Scraton et al., 1999). This is supported by similar research undertaken by Cox and Thompson (2000), Williams (2003) and Welford and Kay (2007). In some cases girls who were keen to play football had no other choice than to choose an alternative which was deemed a more appropriate sport for women, such as netball or tennis:

...when I was at high school I used to wag PE in that the girls had to do dancing and the boys got to do football and soccer. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

I played school soccer in the UK, at a time when girls didn't normally play. We played one year in the school team with boys and then they brought in a rule that girls couldn't play with boys so I had to play the following year in netball, while the boys played football. It would have been 1973 or around that time. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

I would have loved to have played it when I was a kid but it wasn't around and I think back then it would have been a big deal if we were playing football cause it was netball and tennis, not soccer. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

My first team was a primary school team (Brookhurst Primary School). I had my hair cut short like a boy when I was five or six so I could participate in the schools competition. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

I never played as a young girl. I used to play netball as a young girl. I wasn't aware that women played football back then in England. I never heard of it. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

I started off with the Goonellabah Soccer Club from under six and played with the boys up until under sixteens. Roughly when I was about fourteen years I played

both the women's and the boy's game, played Division one on the Sunday and played with boys on the Saturday. (Lisa Casagrande 11/12/12)

Due to the physical changes I was unable to play with the boys in the secondary school team. However, that did not deter the lads and I from kicking a ball during break time. By this time I was old enough to commence playing in a women's team, but I was still able to train and play with the boys in an unofficial way. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

I had to sit with him while he trained and then my mum would pick us up. I used to think that it was unfair that I could play in the backyard with everybody in the street but couldn't play out there. So he was a goal keeper and I used to stand beside the goals and being my little brother I used to run out and kick the ball out if it was going in, so in the end they used to tell me to go away. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

Once some of the women reached high school attitudes had begun to change and women's sport was becoming much more acceptable. Here Helen describes the joy of being involved with the creation of a women's football competition in school, while at the same time all of her friends were involved in what was considered the more gender appropriate sports of tennis and netball. Even though a breakthrough had been made in relation to allowing women to play football in a more formal manner at high school, the acceptance of the gender norm by the other girls at the school, in that football was a male sport, still inhibited participation and may have acted as a deterrent for those who may have been thinking of joining:

By the time I was in year eleven we got the school team going and the competition with the school sport, because they never had women's soccer in school sport before, so we got that going as well and it was really good. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

Everyone was encouraging and even at school. We actually got a school competition going when I was in high school and that was just from me playing and all my friends knew that I was playing. Even though my girlfriends at school,

they all played netball and tennis, I was the only one that played soccer. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

For those women who did manage to play football at a young age, either at school, club or at some other informal level they still had to negotiate attitudes suggesting that football was inappropriate for girls. At school, sport for women was still subject to perceptions of gender appropriateness and this was sometimes reinforced by teachers' attitudes which were at times discouraging and frustrating (Welford and Kay 2007). Theresa's experiences are examples of stereotypical attitudes expressed by teachers:

When I went to High School and I was playing football, I went to a mixed girls and boys Secondary College, Catholic, that was run by the nuns and the brothers. When I was fourteen or fifteen, I was playing for a State team, the reaction from the nuns, was "Why are you doing that?" (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

But when we had to travel to other schools and we were playing against predominantly boys' schools I can remember one of the Brothers, Brother Joe, funny how these things stick in your memory, pulled me into his office and said, "I don't think you can play Theresa, this game we are going to St Bede's, I don't think you can play because there is nowhere for you to change and I don't think it is right that a girl should be playing soccer". (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

The initial reaction was hard. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

The lack of knowledge about the sport of football by some teachers also acted as a deterrent to women playing the game in school. It was often left to parents to provide the introduction and support both at home and in the school:

When my daughter went to Grimshaw Primary her and another girl said we don't want to play any sport, can we play soccer, I said yeah course you can. No, before that the teacher said I know nothing about soccer except that the ball is round, I'm taking the footy team, will you take the soccer team? I said yeah ok. (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

This type of attitude was not restricted to sport in school but also experienced in other formal institutions at the time:

I played football in an under eleven's team and very successfully and won the best and fairest and it was a church team and when they found out I was a girl I had to give the award back and I wasn't allowed to play anymore. So try and explain that to a ten year old. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

While the majority of women expressed frustration in being a young girl trying to break into the male dominated world of football, Sharon expressed her thoughts on how hard it was for her brothers to play soccer in a country which culturally had yet to fully accept the sport:

When I started playing it was just like Johnny Warren's Book, 'Sheilas Wogs and Poofers', it was a girl's game it wasn't a boy's game. So no, people just accepted it straight away. I think my brothers had more of a hard time than I did and my sister. It was just generally accepted. We never had a problem. (Sharon 14/8/13)

Football was clearly a male dominated sport and access to it was not always formally available. The women at this stage of their sporting lives were unknowingly transgressing the boundaries of gendered space (Scraton et al. 1999) by endeavouring to access a sport predominately played and run by men. The women's desire to gain an opportunity to play was challenging the inbuilt and generally accepted gender bias of the time. In order to participate in football and negotiate this accepted stereotype, most of the women interviewed reported being introduced to the game by a male member of the family, usually a brother or father. This finding is similar to that made by Jean Williams in *A Game for Rough Girls* (2003) and *Globalising Women's Football: Europe, Migration and Professionalisation* (2013) where she speaks about the influence of male bureaucrats and male family members introducing women to the game. Further research undertaken by Scraton et al. (1999) closely relates to the experiences of the women interviewed.

Even at this early age, the opportunities for girls to choose their physical activities were largely dependant on male encouragement and approval. Many of the women in our research were encouraged by fathers, brothers or male friends to step into this boys' space and thus gained entry into the informal male football culture (Scraton et al. 1999, p.102).

Some of the women interviewed were introduced to the game by female friends who were already involved or had a brother or boyfriend involved:

I was in second form at school and basically that team at Richmond River, the majority were made up of Richmond River High School kids. They all got involved because their brothers played or their boyfriends so that's how that came about. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

I think my brother and I were just kids who loved sport and with Dad's encouragement that is what happened. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

Our dad encouraged both my sister and I to do anything we wanted to do – no questions asked, just go and do it. He was probably the biggest influence. If he didn't say go play sport or keep up with it then I wouldn't be playing. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

I was married to an Italian and I had six brother-in-laws and we used to play indoor soccer together. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

I was playing softball for Wenty Waratahs and I was always liked soccer when I was younger because of my twin brother. I used to play in his team but they never had any girls' teams so I used to play in his team as one of the boys, because I had short hair and then I got too old to play in that team so I played softball. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

Three of my brothers they were playing at the time. We used to go to soccer my sister and I and watch our brothers play. We were only young I was only about nine or ten and we wanted to go to soccer training too as we wanted to play. He would watch us kicking the ball around and said "wow they are pretty good", so he

was trying, between all of us and our friends, trying to get something happening in the way of girls playing soccer. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

I became involved in women's football, from a young age. I wanted to play competitive sports, from memory netball I was too young for, my father was a footballer so I followed him around playing rugby league and somehow because I couldn't get into the netball he enrolled me into soccer which was just up the road from where we used to live. (Lisa Casagrande 11/12/12)

As well as the pathways provided by the fathers, brothers and boyfriends of the women, male football peers provided an additional way of introduction to the game with some of the women interviewed commenting on the support from males involved in the game:

So I then ran the boundary line for AFL so I was very sporty and I was really good with coordination and ball skills you know I just kicked the ball with my mates and stuff. And as I said I was in my early 20's really when my brother-in-laws conned me into playing soccer and cause I was the best player in their team so even though I was a girl they were like you're playing with us. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

I was a late bloomer and I didn't play junior football at all and so I was in my mid 20's. I was playing indoor soccer with my in-laws, cause I could play a bit, and the guy refereeing the indoor game said to me you should play women's football and I laughed, and I went girls don't play football, what are you talking about? And he said no, no, they do. So he connected me to a club and I think I was about 25 when I started playing. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

While women are often introduced by male family members to the game, some men had a different understanding. From a previous footballer and now a father's perspective:

My first experience of women's football, look I didn't know they played. When I was playing, it wasn't encouraged and the odd girl would play and she'd play generally in a boys team and play and then she'd get to thirteen or fourteen and basically be told she couldn't play, it is inappropriate now . . . (Paul Turner 19/7/12)

Now experiencing his daughter's introduction to the game, playing with the boys and facing deterrents to enjoying and participating not unlike those women he had experienced in his playing career:

My eldest one started off and was one girl in a small sided football competition, she dropped out cause she didn't like being the only girl. So it was only a couple of years later so she would have been about ten or eleven when she started and she dropped out for a couple of years and then when she was about twelve she said can I start playing again but I want to play in a girls' team. We found a girls' team, an all girls team for her although she quite enjoys playing against the boys, she just doesn't want to play in a boys team.

And my littlest one she started, she played in a small sided football comp and was the only girl again and just said I don't want to be the only girl, so if she had of had another girl she would have kept coming so I've lost her to netball now.(Paul Turner 19/7/12)

Family and community support

After being introduced to the game all of the women interviewed commented on the important role that both family and the community played in their continuing on and succeeding in football. Most stated that if they had not had the support of family that they would not have been able to play. Welford and Kay (2007) state that the support of male friends and family members is critical in keeping the female footballer in touch with the football world:

That's the difference, again it's the family and the community, which is the biggest influence on whether a female plays football and continues to play. I have got lots of friends that are in the game because their parents are really supportive. I think that is the biggest thing. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

...well our family was totally soccer orientated you know. (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

The community has a massive effect. Depending on where you live and which suburb, if they have a football club and have a women's team and females know about that women's team, they are going to go and play for that team. If the club

wasn't supportive of females playing sport or football then females wouldn't play. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

I'm really lucky my family were always really supportive and as I said my grand dad when he was alive would cart me around everywhere. I think mum and dad, and look cause I was older I was driving so you know I could get myself to and from and I was married so my poor husband was very supportive cause he had to, because if he wanted to spend time with me. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

My mum, my family were always supportive in terms of what I wanted to do. It didn't matter what. Mum saw the fact that me and my brother and I were hanging out and I was looking after him. So looking out for him and stuff like that so mum had no issues, my sisters had no issues. (Belinda Wilson 12/2/13)

Everyone, no one in my circle, people that I knew ever turned their noses up. They were all supportive and at some point said, "see that girl over there she will play for Australia one day". They were, everyone was fantastic. (Dalys Carmody 19/6/12)

Yeah, look I think I've got total support from my family, that's critical for me to be able to do what I do. You know my parents were probably a little bit surprised in the early days like many people including others involved in football and the media. (Heather Reid 31/7/13)

Mum used to always come and watch, maybe the theory was that at least they know what you are doing and keeping out of trouble and enjoying it. I think she knew she could never stop me. I used to go and kick a ball at school, play all day at school then come home and kick a ball again. I think she knew it was a lost cause from day one to ever try and attempt to stop me play. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

I think I was very lucky with my parents, that when we came to Australia the new beginning that we had. I was told then by my parents that you can do whatever you want to do and you can be whoever you want to be, which is what people are telling their kids now. I was lucky enough to have that back then. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

My parents were also very sporty so they were quite happy for us to play. My Dad use to play AFL in Melbourne for Carlton. Mum played A grade tennis all her life against people like Margaret Court. They were very good sports people and every one of my brothers and sisters have played at representative level at something, whether it was cricket or ...(Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

However not all members of the family were in support of their daughters playing football. Some players described how they had difficulties in receiving support from their parents:

Mum and Dad divorced when I was one so Dad brought my twin sister and I up since the age of one. Mum knew that I played football but didn't really understand it. She would say "If I brought you up you would be completely different". But it wasn't until she flew over to Germany in 2006/7 and saw me play that she understood the game, why I played and was really proud knowing how I played and also realised how good I was at football. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

I actually wanted to start playing when I was going to High School. We just wanted to get a couple of teams together, schoolmates and things like that. But when I went home with that piece of news to Mum and Dad, I was shocked at their reaction, as I had played every other sport, I was playing hockey at the time. I couldn't see how soccer was any more dangerous than that and basketball, I was really good at athletics, but couldn't play soccer apparently. I got cranky and so did they (laughter). That didn't eventuate. That's why I didn't play then until I was old enough that they couldn't tell me what to do. They were only looking after my welfare. They thought soccer was just too rough. Especially Mum and heading the ball would do all sorts of damage. She just didn't want to know about it. (Nell Perry 3/12/12)

Helen describes a humorous experience about the reactions of her mother-in-law:

Apart from my mother-in-law that kept telling me I was getting too old and to give it away (laughter) for years and years. She would say, "you have four kids, you shouldn't be playing, you are in your 30's now, you shouldn't be playing, you are too old". Until I got to my late 30's and then she was skiting about it, "my daughter-

in-law is nearly 40 and she is still playing soccer” (laughter), so she changed her tune. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

The general lack of knowledge about women playing football and the different approaches to the game, in particular the nature of women's sport which recognises social interaction, enjoyment and continued participation in leisure activities as important (Lenskyj 1994, Welford and Kay 2007), was often not recognised by the male patriarchal view of sport and the family. Maggie describes a visit by her parents to see her play:

Mum and Dad have always known I was a sporty person, but they hadn't heard of football either as far as females playing. When they came over for a holiday, they came and had a look at my game. Dad didn't think much of it of course. Very amateurish type playing. Blokes didn't understand social football. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

The lack of family support was by far surpassed by the positive experiences of support from family, friends and community. Some of the women interviewed looked at the game in a more holistic way and thought of it as a great sport for not only women but for the whole family to enjoy:

But you know across the board football is one of the few sports that women, families, you know families can enjoy together so I think that it's really important and I've got nothing but total support from my family for what I've been able to do. (Heather Reid 31/7/13)

And in turn what the women's game can do for the community in return:

Then of course you've got the whole thing that what football can do for new arrivals and you know refugees. Just quietly working away in our community we've got you know people from Sudan and other sorts of African nations that are playing in little tournaments that we help facilitate through migrant services or the Red Cross or church groups to help those people understand about Australian society and to help them become more included in the local community. (Heather Reid 31/7/13)

The support of work and close friends was also important to the women interviewed. Many would not have been able to continue on playing, particularly at a high level without the support of friends, work and local businesses in supplying moral and financial support:

At work they all thought it was pretty neat actually. My friends who knew me weren't surprised by it anyway. I would have a go at anything. They were really supportive. (Nell Perry 3/12/12)

The community were very supportive, we went round different business and we got enough prizes for our raffles and we set up in a shop front with the prizes and we would be there with our ticket books and we sold heaps of tickets. To wrap the lamingtons, they were a real money spinner. I can't imagine flights to Perth being real cheap. We got over there and had our accommodation. (Nell Perry 3/12/12)

When we came home we had to raise money for airfares. We found the community very supportive. We would hold stalls down the street. We went round different businesses and got them to donate prizes for raffles, they were good. We raised enough money, can't remember exactly how much it cost us now, or how much we contributed ourselves, but I am pretty sure that we raised the major part of what we needed. We had lamington drives. They were always a big hit. We would go to Klaus's place after work or after training and make these flaming lamingtons. I am not joking, we were so sick of lamingtons. (laughter) I always remember Klaus' dog would sit under the kitchen table and anything that would hit the deck, the dog got!! (lots of laughs). We made lots of lamingtons. We raised a lot of money. (Nell Perry 3/12/12)

I was working for an importing company and my boss gave me a few things to raffle off. One got up on one of the chairs and announced "Dalys is representing Australia in the Oceania Cup, she has to come up with X amount of dollars, lets try and help her out on her way, so she doesn't have to pay her own way. They put around the hat. I don't think I had to pay much at all. They just threw in \$10 and \$20 notes and helped me out. I was really lucky with the Grays Point community as a whole, they were fantastic. (Dalys Carmody 19/6/12)

I was fortunate that my work would allow me to have leave without pay. So it wasn't paid leave but they would at least, my job would still be there when I came back. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

I mean look I was very fortunate my organisation where I worked for nine years while everyone got promoted over me cause I was always away, look they did fund raisers for me, they were very supportive, they sponsored me, you know, they were incredibly good to me really. I just never got promoted really because I was away with the team or I was doing this, or I was doing that. So I think it always comes back to a financial perspective which impacts on your life. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

If I had of got selected we would have got a bigger grant and that type of stuff to go to the World Cup you know and we didn't go so you know it was always lamington drives, fund raising and all that. All on my side, you know my family was very supportive and my friends. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

It was hard to get sponsorship because it was only people that really knew me that helped me. For example my mother's work sponsored me \$500 because they knew about what my mother's daughter was doing. I worked for the National Bank, they knew about my career, the National Bank was really supportive in my early years. I worked for Safeway as a checkout chick and the people who knew or had interest in their staff and had the knowledge were really supportive. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

Work was really supportive. I commenced fulltime work at Telstra (then Telecom Australia) in 1983 and they gave me leave without pay, now you get elite athlete leave. They never knocked me back when I needed to play, so work was very supportive. Even now with my coaching commitments they are still very supportive, they are flexible with what I need to do. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

I got a job very quickly within two weeks with the National Australia Bank and ended up going through the ranks and becoming a Senior Lending Officer with the Bank until the day that I took five years long service leave to have my first child. They supported my career the whole way so I couldn't ask for better than what they did. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

Some players recalled some mixed feedback from friends while they were playing or involved with football, however the general level of support was strong and important to the women in continuing to play and enjoy the game:

Yes they were very surprised. Some googled me. They would say things like “you’ve got a Wikipedia page!” and in surprise say “you play football” but it is not in a negative way. No matter what they would not let social events hinder my training or games and were never disappointed that I couldn’t go away with them during the schools holidays because they knew how I love the sport and wanted me to succeed. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

So when I was eighteen and going out to the pub and obviously early hours of the morning if football was on tele and I’m watching the football instead of discussing or whatever’s going on at a point of time in terms of conversation and they’d go what are you doing? I’m watching the football. Why? Because I like it and it’s that hour of the morning when I can watch it. (Belinda Wilson 12/2/13)

Other people started questioning why are you doing that, you’re never going to earn a living from it, you should be, you should just focus on this, you should focus on that. And this was people who are already, one person who was already set up, that was Leo, and the other one was my flatmate George who I did outrigging and water polo with. So yeah, those two in particular questioned why I did it and they are probably the only ones out of my friends who were a little bit negative in terms of my involvement. (Belinda Wilson 12/2/13)

Other women maintained that because your life was so involved with football that your friends naturally came from being involved:

Most of my friends came from playing football, so you tended to stay within those groups. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

A lot of my friends were playing, and other friends got involved on the social side, because there was always some type of social event going on. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

Continuing in the game: The supporting male

While gaining access to the game often relied heavily on the influence of a male family member or friend, the women also found that to continue on playing that ongoing support and acceptance from male peers played an important role. This level of support was clearly displayed by male coaches and players that the women encountered in the earlier years of their playing development:

We had a lovely coach, Ron Tripp. He used to take as many girls he could fit into his car as possible. We had to go out to Marconi, Parramatta and places like that. It was a long way, but you did what you did to play. I can remember him, he was a fantastic coach. I learnt a lot from him. A guy called John Doyle. He was our coach. He had the girls for a couple of years. Actually I thought he was a brilliant coach. Very hard, but I learnt a lot from him. Allan Lynton was another one. He was our coach for NSW, but apart from that, all men in growing up in football. They were great, really good. (Dalys Carmody 19/6/12)

But you know we had some very supportive guys who were referees and administrators who, and coaches, our first coach I knew was a guy named Andy Ross and Andy was a defence strategist and that's the way we played the game. It was always attack, you know attack or defence, so everything was strategised according to the way in which Andy approached his work as well, but he was terrific. (Heather Reid 31/7/13)

Our men's players, when I was playing for Thistles, they always supported us. They would come and watch our games and we would go and watch their games. I can't remember any real negativity from the fellows, about us. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

We got on really well with them. We used to train on the same night as the senior men, so we would catch up afterwards. They would come and watch some of our games or the girls would go and watch some of their games. I got on really well with all the coaches that coached the senior men, they were always up for a chat. Sometimes the girls would join into some of their sessions for cross training. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

I've had, I mean, a lot of friends that are team players, male players and gone out partying in my younger days. So I've had a really good relationship with a lot of men players especially at Coburg. Very social between the men and women, which is good. (Carolyn Monk 23/7/12)

He never missed a training session. If we couldn't get to a State training day, he would still come with us and drive us. My girlfriend was a very good player too. He would drive us to all the meets all over Sydney, anywhere wherever they happened to be. He was very good and very enthusiastic. A lot of the other coaches when I have been older have been somebody's husband or dad. They have all been good, there has never been a problem. Some are more enthusiastic than others, but you get that with anything. No it's too cold to train, lets go to the pub, that sort of thing (laughter), which we really didn't object to. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

As far as my club coaches were concerned they were always dads. They were always fine because they were in it to help their daughters. Once in a while you were lucky enough to get someone who actually had some soccer knowledge that could teach you something new. My father coached a number of the teams that I played in and he also coached a State team. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

Some of the women who had gained national selection or who were involved with the game at the top level also shared experiences of support from male coaches and peers:

...some of the National coaches were absolutely wonderful and have done a heap of work in promoting the women's game. Fred Robbins from Queensland was my first National Coach and I'm still in contact with Fred now. He was a pioneer and was in it for all the right reasons. He just wanted to see the development of the world game for females. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

But in terms of even with the more professional players when we're flying in for functions and stuff they're very open, very open to come and speak to me and discuss the game, discuss the performance of the girls. No issues whatsoever. (Belinda Wilson 12/2/13)

The level of support for women elite footballers was almost non-existent in the 1980s. Betty recalls the occasion that the women's Victorian state team acquired tracksuits for their trip to Sydney through the assistance of a male involved in the game:

The only person that ever, and this is, God bless his soul, George Wallace. I went down there one day and he said Betty what's wrong? I said George we're going to Sydney and this was 1981, we're going into Sydney. I said we can't afford tracksuits, we can't, he phoned up Teddy Whitton at Adidas. Ted I want 20 track suits for the Victorian girls soccer team, that's the only thing we ever got free from the VSF. (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

Some of the women spoke about the social interaction with the men and how it formed such a huge part of their involvement with the game. Vicki describes the close relationship between the men and women involved with the Rovers football club on the far north coast of New South Wales:

The fellas were always supportive of the girls. It was like they'd have their game on a Saturday and we'd go and watch them and like it was a big you know you'd have 40 people, it was a real club thing. Then the fellas would all go out. Everything shut at twelve then, but they'd have hangovers and the first thing they'd go and watch was women's soccer at nine o'clock Sunday morning with their pie and coke. It was an atmosphere, it was a fair atmosphere then, it still is now but it was more, yeah the men and the women supported each other big time in the club. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

Whether they were all trying to hit on the girls as partners I don't know (laughter).

Vicki then goes on to share the story of how she met her husband:

Brian my husband, that's how we met actually, he was coach in 1980 of our team so I used to get a lot of cramps (laughter). He had to come off the field and rub my legs but anyway (laughter), that's another story.

It was a joke in those days that whoever coached the women's side would end up marrying someone in the team. It went on for about five years. It did happen, yeah. So in the end we weren't getting any male coaches, they thought it was a trap. I've been set up here (laughter). (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

Some women who were keen to improve their standard of play commented on the value of playing against the men:

As a young woman playing in senior team practice matches have also been organised against men's teams and whilst the women may not be as physically fast as they were, certainly mentally faster which helped us gain a lot of football knowledge and experience. Having played against young lads and men has helped improved my game. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

Support was also found on the administration side of the women's game:

In general I found it was very good, when I was on the board I got to meet all the Presidents of the men's Premier League Clubs. They were very receptive to me, initially they didn't wanted to know, but once they got to know my face and saw me around I wasn't scary, they were very good, they were very polite. I found it was quite good, as far as the administration level goes.

The President himself is very supportive of women's football and I have met with him many times at different functions and have had great conversations, he is very supportive. I am quite happy with that and the previous President as well before that. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

While the vast majority of the women experienced a high degree of male peer support, some experiences were not always positive. For Maggie being involved with some of the ethnic clubs in Melbourne during the 1980s, where the female players were merely tolerated rather than supported, it was a different story:

The male players they tended to stay separate . . . We didn't interact with the male side of things, especially my side of town, which was the Northern Suburbs, which

were very ethnic clubs, and women weren't really part of the playing aspect, unless you were in the canteen, which was pretty much it. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

However Louisa sums up the view of the majority of the women interviewed. While there are stories of lack of male peer support, the overall feeling is one of optimism for the future:

When you look around, you find a lot of male coaches and administrators are supportive of the women's game and more men are getting involved with the women's games or encouraging their daughters to play the sport. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

And from a male coach's point of view:

I coach metro which I thought was gonna be kick and giggle stuff that was going to be absolutely awful and you know I thought yeah ok, what am I getting myself in for. First game we played I thought, yeah the girls are great you know technically they're quite poor but everyone who's involved wants to try and play better football. (Paul Turner 19/7/12)

The stories shared by these women (and man) indicate that the opportunities for them to play football were often limited by conventional gender expectations which made access to the game difficult. The attitudes of society at this time, based on the perception that football was not a suitable game for girls, resulted in obstacles which these women needed to address if they wished to gain access to football at a young age. Most of the women were able to enter the male-dominated game with the assistance and encouragement of a male family member or friend, and were able to remain in the game with the support of family, friends and the community.

Gender identity in the beginning

Much has been written about gender identity in relation to women and their involvement with the male-dominated sport of football. (Scruton et al. 1999, Caudwell 1999, Cox and Thompson 2000, Welford and Kay 2007) The

majority of the research is based upon the close association between football, masculinity and the role that football plays in the development of young boys. Young women who become involved with the game are often seen as masculine, or feel that they need to acquire or display male traits to either gain access to the sport or be accepted in the male football culture. They can develop a self-perception of their gendered identity as being one associated with male traits (for example, tomboyism). Issues relating to the women's self perceptions of their gendered identities were not a strong theme among the interviewees and only a couple of women spoke about themselves as other than female or feminine. This was evident when they were describing childhood experiences. While they described themselves as tomboy or with a desire to be a boy in order to play the game, neither considered themselves other than what they were – young women. It was discussed within a framework of the desire to play and was not raised as an issue. None of the women described any experiences which created any conflict for them as they developed as women football players:

I didn't really care about that, but yes it came across to us that if you played you had to be butch but I liked the game so much I didn't care. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

I desperately wanted to be a boy and play football. It is about being confronted by the prejudices of a young woman playing in a men's game. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

Not that I haven't played with girls that are very feminine, but I was always a bit of a tomboy. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

As both a father of young women football players and a coach of women's teams, Paul commented in his interview in relation to gender issues:

Look I reckon it's a great game for girls and women. I think it's, they're well suited and I think men as well, it's one of the few games that you can really almost say has that gender almost neutrality.

Love of the game

Although the women came to the game in many different ways and playing football has different meanings for different women, there are some shared meanings and values identified by all players. They all shared a great amount of pleasure from playing the game and the physicality of being involved. One of the most mentioned aspects of their experiences was an overriding love of the game. Theresa shares her thoughts on playing the game she loves:

We play sport for the love of the game and that it is where my motivation came from and continues to come from. It is not about me, it is about us. That is why I get angry when I hear about, its not about look what I have done for the sport, it is about what the sport has done for me and I wouldn't be who I am if it wasn't for the people and the acquaintances and friendships and the situations that I have been in along the way. So I have high admiration for any women in soccer that has a small part to play. Everybody should be recognised today. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

The majority of the women commented on the joy of playing the game and the 'excitement of being physical':

It's just our life you know, our friendships and everything come from soccer. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

Why are you always going to football blah blah blah. It's because I enjoyed it, I loved it. (Belinda Wilson 12/2/13)

I loved it so much I just couldn't get enough of soccer. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

I loved every minute of it. (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

I did it because I loved my sport plus I loved training and I wanted to make my mum and dad proud of me, you know, that was my drive besides the love of the game. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

I started as a right forward and I loved it, absolutely loved it, running up and down the wing and trying to score goals, it was terrific. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

...so it's just I loved it, just wanted to always play it, to run, always wanted to be in a sport you can run a lot. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

In my first game I nearly got kicked up into the air in the first 30 seconds, welcome to football. I hadn't played with or against adults. You look back, there were no shin pads, the pitches were mud pits. But I really enjoyed it. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

In an official capacity I have been involved since I was 12 years old. Through most of my club adult life until now, I don't know anything else really. I can't imagine not being involved. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

I enjoy it because it is healthy. Healthy body healthy mind. For me it is just a nice mental release, something else to think about, you don't have to think about work, you don't have to do the washing or just those little house chores. You can switch off, especially playing wise. You escape from everyday life. It is the time to switch off and not focus on anything and get lost in that moment chasing around the football. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

Some expressed their feelings about the game in terms of passion:

I fell in love with football again and found myself again in terms of who I was and why I was doing it and yeah, just got that passion back (Belinda Wilson 12/2/13)

Well, it has been very important in my life. It took up such a big part of it. I was either playing or training six or seven days a week at one point. I have always been passionate about soccer. I still love it, I still want to keep playing for as long as possible. I have always been passionate about it. It has been my main sport nearly all my life, even though I have played lots of other sports. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

Jane's experience as a coach and manager of women's teams and as a mother of young girls playing the game explains how she feels about women's football:

Loved it, it's such a, such a, I know it sounds stupid, it's such a good game for the girls. The kids at school I coach every term at school four days, four teams a week, and once they start playing they get so enthusiastic. It's something about, I don't know it's being outside, on the grass, playing a game with boys. I don't know what it is but girls generally just love it and it's really exciting seeing them getting excited about it. (Jane Natoli 24/7/12)

As the manager of school teams Jane experiences the joys of getting away from the day-to-day work commitments and the rewards that it brings:

The experiences of just being away, the drudgery of the week-to-week training, the actual week away is always really special. The way the kids either lift or crumble under the pressure, that's a good experience. It's being with the kids and the relationships you form with them. I still see kids from ten years ago and I don't know, that's, to me that's the best reward. Except for my own daughter watching her play and watching my kids play, apart from that I don't know, it's just all good. (Jane Natoli 24/7/12)

The comradery and friendships formed along the way play an important role in why these women loved their involvement in football:

You know I've got friends and colleagues all over the world as a result of football. (Heather Reid 31/7/13)

I still have friends from that first period of time when I played and some of my closest friends now were generated from the second stint, when I played with Thistles. I see them quite a lot, several times a year and even more. Most of them are coming out here for a Christmas Party in a week's time. (Nell Perry 3/12/12)

I'm not involved with the game really but I'm still involved with friends that I've made so all my best friends like so yeah, friends just are the best thing. (Carolyn Monk 23/7/12)

My memories from that time were just wonderful. We were all a very similar age range from 17 through to 25, and on that tour I was with Shona Bass a fellow Victorian and Andrea Martin also a Victorian. Even though those two players

played for Greensborough, which was the big opposition team for the local competition they pretty much looked after me, took care of me and showed me the ropes. My memories of that first tour were wonderful, because then I got to meet some great players from New South Wales and Queensland. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

Girls just want to have fun

Scraton et al. (1999) argues that while football remains a game dominated by men, there is a fear that those women who are involved with playing the game will adopt dominant masculine values which have become central to the game, such as competitiveness, aggression and a win at all costs attitude.

Hargreaves (1994) argues further that due to large scale male influence the women's game will take on the values and practices of the men's game rather than developing its own. While the women interviewed indicated that they enjoyed playing the game hard and competitively, they also incorporated their own meanings into their activities, such as being connected as part of a team and the importance of having fun (Scraton et al. 1999, p.107). Vicki recalls an occasion that supports the argument that women do often have their own reasons for playing the game which at times can differ from those of the men:

I remember vividly down at the Rous one night the boys, a couple of the men named a couple of female players and said they'd be far better than you lot. My thing was always there's never a comparison, you have men's tennis and you have women's tennis, you have women's football you have men's football. Forever the two should not mix because I mean strength and body structure and all that. Anyway there was just this argument that went round and round and I ended up leaving in tears because I thought just let the girls have fun. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

So it's always been a thing for years after that Cindi Lauper's song 'Girls just want to have fun', whenever we went to the Rous we always hit that first and boys would all go yeah, yeah we get it, we get it. I just wanted to play so it was the main thing, and I wanted it promoted, I just wanted more and more girls to play and just enjoy it. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

The importance of having fun was a significant value expressed by the majority of the women interviewed. Playing the game was more about being carefree and being part of a team, and where winning was not the most important thing. The women loved the game itself and talked about the social benefits of being involved and the desire to be playing for many years into the future. Welford and Kay (2007) argue that this difference is a redefining of the women's sporting experiences, away from what normally constitutes the dominant male model of sport which is based on aggression, win at all costs and a singularly competitive attitude:

We just had such fun. We used to really enjoy ourselves, that's what I remember about it. I don't remember any bitchiness, I suppose it might have been around but it went straight over me. I was just out there playing the game and having a good time. (Nell Perry 3/12/12)

The age range was huge but it didn't matter because we all just were there because we had fun, we loved it. The best thing was rolling in the mud and enjoying ourselves. It was just carefree and whatever happened, happened. I remember one game we played against Greensborough and it was thirteen – nil they beat us and I was in goals and I remember coming off the field after the game and not having a care in the world. That thirteen goals had gone in and the opposition team was coming up to me and patting me on the back and saying how wonderfully I played. I thought ok that's all right. But it was the pure enjoyment of just being in the team that made me continue on. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

Around club level I love to see the girls running around. They just enjoy it so much. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

I want to be part of the team, not be a coach player, I don't like that at all. Not at my age now, I just go in it for fun. We all play for fun. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

It is just fun, people only go to Masters for fun (laughter).

I will continue playing for as long as I can. There are people in the 60's still playing, I know a lady who was 75 and still playing hockey. It's a good social outlet as well.

Even when I was playing competitive, I never once thought about what team I was in, it was like “great we are playing New Zealand today, it’s going to be a better game”, like a more competitive game. I never thought about winning, I never thought about anything like that, I just thoroughly enjoyed playing and it didn’t matter whether we won twenty nil or lost twenty nil. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

all my trips away with the girls, . . . I mean a lot of that was fun. (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

Oh no they were a great bunch of girls and we had some great fun. (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

From a playing perspective, playing in the women’s league, World Master’s Games was a huge amount of fun. You just go out and had a great time. Some of the women on my team didn’t want to play because they were going to get beat, I didn’t understand it. Of course you are going to get beat when you play against international players. If you are going to play, play. I enjoyed it. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

While John's time as a coach of a female team did not have any major impact on his life, he still has fond memories of his involvement:

It was really important, I really enjoyed my time and you know it hasn’t made any lasting differences to my life I don’t think (laughter).(John Hughes 24/7/12)

While many of the women reflected on what the game meant to them personally, some took a more holistic approach and looked at the game's wider benefits. Heather believes that the game has a wider benefit to the community. Her love of the game is about inclusiveness and the opportunities it provides for everyone in the community:

I am about the totality of the sport. I value you know the men’s masters participation and the boy’s under fives and the men’s premier league as much as I value the women’s. I mean it’s what I love about the sport. (Heather Reid 31/7/13)

I love football and I love the diversity and I love the opportunities that are there for a whole range of people and I love the way football brings social inclusion, it brings people from different backgrounds together. (Heather Reid 31/7/13)

Discussions with the women demonstrated that while each had a different story to tell many of their experiences shared common themes. Opportunities for access to the game for young women were limited. Obstacles to participation which had grown out of socially developed perceptions of gendered norms had to be negotiated for these women to play the game. This task was almost unanimously addressed with the assistance of a male family member or friend, and the women depended heavily on the support of family, friends and the community for them to continue on in the sport.

Many of these women were generally accepted into the male football culture with the majority of them having experiences playing with the boys and in local neighbourhoods. They had managed to renegotiate their gender identity and enter the male domain of football.

CHAPTER SIX

The Road to Acknowledgement and Respect

Women and girls' football in Australia has achieved a hard-earned level of acceptance from within the national football culture and is now noticeable throughout the broader sporting landscape. Women compete in their own semi-professional national league (Westfield W-League since 2008), and are open to qualification for the FIFA Women's (since 1991), U/17 (2008) and U/20 (2002) World Cup tournaments and the Olympic Games (since 1996).

It can be argued that football in Australia is generally accepted as a game that is suitable for women. While the game has gained a degree of acceptance many of the women interviewed feel that the game itself and their individual efforts have not always been taken seriously and have often been trivialised. The women are aggrieved that those who pioneered the game are yet to be acknowledged fully and that women's football still suffers from a lack of respect from both within and outside of the game.

Cox and Pringle (2011) researched the emergence of the female footballer in New Zealand. They state that in the early years of women's football the game struggled with a lack of acceptance that women could or should play football. Those who did struggled to be recognised as serious players. Cox and Pringle suggest that academic research examining the status of women's football and those that play has illustrated the difficulties faced by players in their attempts to be accepted as both participants in a physical sport and as women.

It has not been any easier for the development of the men's game in Australia. Johnny Warren reflected on his life in football in Australia in, *Sheilas, Wogs and Poofers: an incomplete biography of Johnny Warren and soccer in Australia* (2003). Warren states that football (soccer) has long battled entrenched cultural and institutional resistance in Australia and that the men who played the game were subject to widespread discrimination. While it is not the intention of this thesis to examine the development of the men's game, it is important to note that there are some similarities between the growth of

both the men's and women's game. Both were subject to discrimination and had to earn a level of respect within the Australian sporting culture.

Not taken seriously

The majority of the women interviewed commented on the lack of acknowledgement of women playing football and were concerned about not being taken seriously. Others shared experiences of their efforts being trivialised and not being recognised by clubs that were only interested in the men's game. Women who played football were often seen as a novelty or an annoyance, and generally not being capable enough to play the game:

I think people just naturally assume that women can't play and don't go and watch.
(Jane Natoli 24/7/12)

As I said they are considered a lower standard and women are not as big and strong as men, therefore you have not got the power to kick a ball as far. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

Clearly second-class. It's changing, it's changing slowly and it's changing, it's different to when I played and probably different again to when Nicky played. It needs to. But that's all female sport. (Caroline Monk 23/7/12)

You have always had the hecklers on the side, which is basically young men that take the piss out of the way women play. That is mainly to do with girls can't play football type attitude. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

Women's participation was seen as a novelty you know we were causing trouble because we wanted access to grounds and referees and money and international competition and things like that. So we were rocking the boat somewhat, you know but I've always seen my involvement as one that's about wanting equity for everyone involved in the game and having you know similar rights and opportunities to the game as men and boys have. (Heather Reid 31/7/13)

Nell's memories of the first competition games on the far north coast of NSW convey her feelings about how the game was trivialised and how she was made to feel about not being involved in a 'real' sport:

I remember our first games, we didn't even get to play with a real soccer ball. We had to play with one of those plastic blow up balls, that were really light and with a breeze blowing and you kicked it high, you would spend the next half hour looking for it because, it just went. I hated that. (Nell Perry 3/12/12)

John, a male coach of women's teams, acknowledges that even when the standard of play was good, the game still was not taken seriously by supporters and those who ran the clubs. Their main focus was on the men's teams. The women were given token acknowledgement and treated with a general lack of respect:

No, they were surprised at how good it was. But it still wasn't really taken that seriously I guess and to be fair the women's premier league standard wasn't going to impress people compared to the men's you know cause it just wasn't up to that level. (John Hughes 24/7/12)

They didn't, they were sort of pushed aside and their focus was getting the men's, the success of the men's team and so the women's team was pretty much treated with no respect, it was just a bit of a joke to them. We had girls, women playing for us who had played, one had played for Greece internationally. Another girl that had played for Ireland was with us for a short time, that didn't make any difference. The big clubs like that their focus is the men's teams. (John Hughes 24/7/12)

Jane's wish is for the women's game to get the same level of respect that the men enjoy:

Look it's such a good game I just wish more people would see it and watch it, especially watching the women's games, no theatrics, they get hit they go down and stand up and it's not lying around on the ground for five minutes unless they're actually hurt, no, I would just love it to get the same respect as the boy's game. We'll get it. (Jane Natoli 24/7/12)

Some of the women felt that while the game suffered from a lack of acceptance or was often trivialised that women needed to be strong and to stand up for what they needed as women playing football. Many have been required to display strong character traits for them to negotiate a pathway to acceptance within the male-dominated game. In some cases it seems that to gain acceptance the women involved needed to be forthright and display strong individual qualities. As discussed above, for these women to be accepted they needed to adopt a strategy that required a display of stereotypically male gender characteristics such as strength, self-assurance, outspokenness and, at times, arrogance.

While there has been a lot written about gender identity in relation to women and their involvement with the male dominated sport of football (Scraton et al. 1999, Caudwell, 2011, Cox and Thompson, 2000, Welford and Kay, 2007), women's self-perceptions of their gendered identities was not a strong theme among the interviewees:

Women have to stand up for themselves to a certain degree and where they do it, it is working and where they don't, nothing will happen and you will get the transient teams that will move from club to club where they get looked after, where they don't get looked after. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

I never went home to mum and dad and said "I'm giving this game away its full of politics and rubbish and it's never going to go anywhere". I never. I'm the type of person who is pretty easy going and if it doesn't work out I have tried that, will do something else or will try another angle. I don't jump up and down and get the cranks about it. (Dalys Carmody 19/6/12)

I'm a survivor. I'm the longest serving CEO, but as I said there's been some times when I've just wanted to walk away but you know I'm stubborn and I'm persistent and something that resonates in the back of my mind is what a friend said to me a very long time ago and that's don't let the bastards get you down. (Heather Reid 31/7/13)

No not really, I can be an obnoxious bastard when I want to! (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

I have good mental strength that has always helped me as a footballer, very determined, so you just have to take the bad with the good. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

Elaine's story considers both the good and bad in dealing with those who ran the game and the development of the women's game in its early years. While she needed to display personal strength, Elaine believes that behaving reasonably in the company of others helped her to be accepted as part of the male-dominated administration:

They might have liked to try it but I'm tougher than that. I found that if you stand up for things in a quite reasonable tone they really can't argue with you because you're speaking reasonably and they think to themselves, oh yes, if that was our sport that's the way I'd speak too. So I did have a great range of acceptance I feel. I never got in any problem areas, which made me feel like going and jumping in the creek or anything like that. I just oh well, that's the way it goes you know. it happens and you've just got to deal with it and the other side of that coin there were so many people with nice attitudes that made you feel welcome and feel appreciated. Worth its weight in gold really. (Elaine Watson 3/9/12)

Nell sums it up best when she comments on how she reacts to other people's opinions:

Maybe other people would have different memories, different experiences but I have never been one to really let other people's opinions concern me that much. Unless it is somebody I really care about. As a general rule, if Joe Blow down the street doesn't like me or thinks I am an idiot, then he can think that. I am not going to lose any sleep over it. (laughter) (Nell Perry 3/12/12)

Referees and 'It's only women's football!'

Some of the women raised concerns about not being taken seriously by authorities within the game. This is particularly evident in the way referees

related to the women's game and the players themselves. The referees seemed to have idiosyncratic perspectives on how women should play the game. Welford and Kay (2007) state that deep-rooted opinions on the appropriateness of football for women, often expressed in the phrase, 'It's only women's football' can be experienced at all levels of the game. The access to and attitudes of the referees in the experiences of the women interviewed had a lasting impression on how they experienced and remembered the game:

Even the referees were biased against women. They treated women's games differently. They'd referee the games differently. Look I had players booked for challenges that were just too physical, that was too hard, things like that. Like as I used to say to them constantly if a guy had done that you wouldn't have said a word. It was perception – be more ladylike when you play, which was just ludicrous. (Annette Hughes 24/7/12)

I had a referee say to me once, come on love this isn't the AFL. Because I was using my body to shield the ball. I'm allowed to use my body and if it's a 50/50 ball, I'm allowed to challenge for it. I don't have to back off because she looks prettier than me or whatever. (Annette Hughes 24/7/12)

I used to get phone calls and say, one of my biggest problems, and I will say this is referees, because one said to me one day, well we don't class you as important. I said we're playing the same sport as those boys, we want referees. And when we had finals he said oh well we'll send so and so, I said is he qualified, well no, but he's only 16/17. That was one of our biggest problems accepting us as senior girls..... you know to get a referee and we did have lots of hassles there. (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

The referees probably, they didn't see us as compared with the men's, actually all round. The referee appointments weren't important, you know, it was just you know we'd get referees that just stood in the centre and never moved so, yeah we were down the list as far as getting refs. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

I played the game hard. I tackled hard. I think that's why I avoided injury because if you pull out of a tackle that's when you're going to get your leg broken. So I did

play the game hard but very fair. I never played dirty, very hard and a lot of referees really struggled with that. (Annette Hughes 24/7/12)

We usually got the dregs of the referees. That's improved in our time. We watched it go from truly awful and not having a ref at all and you always had parents running the lines who would cheat. (Annette Hughes 24/7/12)

Louisa sums it up best with her views on how women's sport should be supported:

Only because we are female and play a women's sport it does not mean we should have a female coach, referee, lines-woman and administrators. Females should always get the best person for the job regardless of their gender. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

Gaining respect with your feet

Gaining acceptance as footballers from male peers and the wider footballing community is important to the women interviewed. They prefer to be accepted as a footballer rather than as a woman playing football. Many state that being able to play well and to be knowledgeable about the game provides them with the best opportunity for acceptance and respect. Welford and Kay (2007) argue in their research, 'Negotiating Barriers to Entering and Participating in Football: strategies employed by female footballers in the United Kingdom', that 'as is often the case with male peers, approval was dependant on proof of ability':

Men will respect you if they see you are a good player. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

Debbie's story of how she was acknowledged as a good footballer provides her with a level of respect as a person who is knowledgeable about the game:

I was probably lucky because I was a half-decent footballer, and I played in boys' teams and right from knee-high-to-a-grasshopper I could well and truly hold my own in any boy's team. So you certainly have respect. Peer respect.

This person is a good footballer, so I had the confidence to, someone said anything, I could quite happily put him or her back in their place. We used to play against, going back to the State team with the girls, we used to play against mixed teams or men's teams and we used to love it. They used to go, "these girls and can play, they are fair dinkum". You earn respect through the years playing against certain teams.

If you could play football they would talk to you differently, absolutely. They didn't see you as a girl they just saw you as a footballer. I would never say they would beat me at something, it would just make me more determined to prove that I was as equal if not better than them. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

Debbie says that success also leads to the respect of clubs who are keen to enjoy the benefits a successful women's team will bring:

I think the fact we had respect and I played with, there were three or four international players in that club side, so most of the time, that club side was the best side in that club and the club realized that and used to run off the publicity that that side generated in the local paper. We would be put in the paper whether it was Berwick City or Casey Comets, we were put up in lights and the clubs realized that was worth tacking on to. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

Louisa's story is similar to others'. Debbie also believes that if male players and coaches recognise you as a good player, then you have earned respect. They will see you more as a footballer rather than as a woman playing football:

When a coach respects you as a player and invites you to train with a team the male players in turn have faith in you because if the coach doesn't trust you then the players won't. In stating this, it is the same within the female game, especially at a National level when you're one Victorian on a training camp with a number of different girls from the same state. You gain respect with your feet. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

The men will respect you because they will see that you are a good player and I have never experienced problems to date. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

I think actions speak louder than words and when they see you that you are a good footballer then people are more likely going to listen to you. Most importantly though, it is your work rate and approach to your work which will gain respect from your peers or elders. You lead by example. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

Dalys had similar recollections:

I was taken seriously. If I would have been any less a person or maybe not as good as a player as I was maybe I wouldn't have been taken as serious. I was taken seriously wherever I wanted to go and whatever I wanted to do. (Dalys Carmody 19/6/12)

Louisa recalls her experiences playing in international competitions in both China and Germany. Louisa observed the gender gap was much less noticeable in the more professional approach to women's football in both China and Germany, where she was treated respectfully and professionally:

In China, they treated the women like they would treat men. There was a lot of support. They even brought in an Olympic gold medallist long jumper, to increase my stamina, agility, speed reaction to help me become more mobile on the field. It was a professional environment and the Chinese wanted to get the best out of me. The team was treated with the utmost respect and there was no shortage of training gear, football boots given for the season. I also had a very positive experience in Germany and very well looked after.

Louisa comments on her current employment with Melbourne City FC (Formerly Melbourne Heart) as a female game development officer. She shares her thoughts on why this is a positive step forward: it recognises the women's game and gives those who aspire to achieve in the game an opportunity to meet with her or others like her:

Melbourne Heart FC have been and are great for the women's game because they have employed a full-time female game development officer. Whilst Melbourne Heart FC do not have a W-League team they are providing the opportunity for young females and aspiring footballers to meet someone that has

played at a high level. Regardless if it is myself or another female employed, it is very positive for the sport.

Being aware of her own ability and success and the impact that this can have on young women players has helped Louisa in her role as game development officer:

I didn't realise until I worked in this job, you get a lot of admiration and feel intimidated at the same time. Coaches have always encouraged me to support the younger and new players entering the elite system and playing at my club, which I have always done. For myself at the young age of 15/16, I wasn't scared of anyone, but you have to think that other people have different mentalities. Therefore, I ensure that players know I'm a certain person on the field and off the field. As I am very competitive on the field and have 'white line fever'.

W-League – a lack of respect?

Women involved in the W-League, argue that FFA's reluctance to improve the current structure of the league (by increasing it to a full home and away contest) shows a lack of respect for the women's game. Belinda argues strongly for the competition to be treated the same as the grassroots and State levels of competition:

At the moment in the W-League, the W-League is fantastic, it's a lot better than it was previous, but it still doesn't have the respect that it needs. It's not a true league, eight teams twelve games, there is nowhere in the world and there is nowhere else in Australia where that happens in a league structure. You're playing two rounds, you play everyone twice and I think that's the biggest challenge in terms of what Australian women's football has. If you're going to do something for the women, have a bit of respect for it and treat it as you would any other competition. So just with that I think that's the biggest challenge, just having equal respect especially when it comes to the national competition. Because you don't have it at grass roots and you don't have it at state level, but at the national level where the standards are supposed to be set, we've said it's ok for women's football not to have a true league and that says a lot. (Belinda Wilson 12/2/13)

Belinda in expressing her frustration at the current structure of the W-League, states that this situation would not occur anywhere else in the world or in Australia. In fact the same situation occurs in Victoria where the AFL is similarly structured (18 teams and 23 rounds). While Belinda's statement may be factually incorrect, it is her understanding of the situation, and one which provides some insight into her personal identity within women's football. A passionate supporter and coach of the women's game.

Heather and Debbie are disappointed that the W-League is not a full home-and-away competition as it detracts from the attractiveness of the league and inhibits its growth:

I'm disappointed that the FFA has not gone to a full home and away for the W-League. We're still stuck with twelve rounds instead of fourteen. They say that's an economic or financial factor but I think it's unfair, it's not a level playing field particularly as we head into the sixth season of the W-League where it's going to be even more competitive and more you know attractive for a whole range of participants and supporters.... you look at Nadine Angerer coming from Germany, is the you know, is the goal keeper captain world cup Euro champion coming to play for Brisbane, that's phenomenal, that calibre of player wants to be in the W-League.

I want it to be total home and away, not a Mickey Mouse part time twelve out of fourteen rounds. You know we've only played in Adelaide once in five years. That means we've only played Adelaide out of five seasons we've played Adelaide once in the first season and twice in season two or three and that's not fair. We want to play in Adelaide and we want Adelaidians to see us play there. (Heather Reid 31/7/13)

In Victoria, to build on where it is at now, to make the W-League bigger and better, because their season is not long enough. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

While some of the women have issues with the structure of the W-League, both Paul and Maggie acknowledge that there are some positive

improvements being introduced which are providing opportunities for young women footballers to strive for recognition and achievement:

What the FFV has done with this open trial for the W-League is absolutely fantastic. That to me for a public relations and a common sense and an opportunity point of view, you know no girl now can argue and say it's a closed shop for the W-League. (Paul Turner 19/7/12)

The FFV will probably end up picking the exact same squad they had last year, don't get me wrong. So all of these other girls who have turned up, they're no chance and none probably, that doesn't matter. As a parent and as a football person looking at it, that's actually great and when they see all the good girls were there, so it wasn't just an exclusive sort of club, everyone had to turn up to play. That to me is something that FFV is doing right. I've said that to a couple of people in FFV land and I went along Monday night and I thought that was great. (Paul Turner 19/7/12)

In Victoria it is good public relations as it makes everybody aware of the higher levels of female football and any publicity like that is good publicity for female football and the W-League. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

The game has changed – A new level of recognition and respect?

The number of women participating in sport has increased markedly since the 1960s. Football is one of the leading examples. Female participation – quite minimal in the 1960s – has grown to an estimated 26 million registered players world-wide according to the FIFA Big Count 2006. The significance of societal changes from the 1970s through to the 1990s including the introduction of federal and state anti-discrimination legislation, the impact of the women's liberation movement and the increase in awareness of individual fitness all contributed to increasing opportunities for women in sport. The women's game in Australia has come a long way since these early days and much has been achieved. The game is now more widely accepted within the male-dominated football culture and women involved in the game can now see a brighter future for themselves.

The women acknowledge the positive developments that are continually being made in the women's game.

Women's participation is no longer a novelty, it's no longer something that is tolerated. You know it's embraced and its even encapsulated in Sepp Blatter's comments that you know the future of football is feminine. (Heather Reid 31/7/13)

I have to say I'm still the only female sitting around the CEO table at FFA meetings but my male colleagues are talking about juniors, junior girls and women's football more so than me which is what I really want to see so it's a whole of sport approach and it's not a marginalised approach. (Heather Reid 31/7/13)

I think most people just accept it now. Women (girls) play soccer just as much as the boys do now almost. Although men can make a career of it and the women can't. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

Paul, Maggie, Debbie and Mick have noticed the changes at the club level and how the numbers of young girls are approaching the game at the grassroots level:

A lot of clubs had never ever seen a female play and that really was the catalyst of changing the way some clubs thought and women themselves within a club.

Mums would get in there and try to get something done other than working in the canteen. (laughter). It was part of everything, there was a bit of everything that helped spark it all off and made it shift. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

I certainly think that the game for women has continued to evolve and I think it's evolved in a good way generally. That's not to say that it hasn't had its problems and issues. The good clubs are actually starting to embrace the girls' game. There's now so many young girls coming through who are good players and going to other clubs who are starting to look after them really well, so the girls are staying there. (Paul Turner 19/7/12)

The girls are actually encouraged to get in and try to control the ball and then to pass it somewhere. I try to encourage my lot to do it and they go what are you talking about? In sixth division, the girls are trying to actually play some football. Which means that the competition is just going to get better and better all the time and every club we play seems to have one or two girls that you go, well they're actually a bit better than this level. (Paul Turner 19/7/12)

We are included in the Premier Awards night so it's just the men's premiers and the women's premiers. They come together and they have done that for about six years now, so that the women get an equal profile. I think at club level some of the clubs would still be well behind. Premier League is fine. The smaller clubs would be a different story. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

That's how far girl's soccer's now progressed. They play the Premier league, they have the same weight as the Victorian Premier league men's teams. A division one men's team plays second fiddle to premiership girls. Second fiddle! (Mick Hoar 25/7/12)

Annette, who migrated to Australia in 1998, has noticed how much the women's game has grown over the past decade:

We came here in 1998, and there was a women's league but it was much, much different to the States and a lot fewer teams, a lot fewer levels, a lot fewer players. Women's soccer has come a long way since then in this country, it has grown tremendously. (Annette Hughes 24/7/12)

The successes of the Matildas in qualifying for the World Cup, improvements in sponsorship and financial support, improving skills, and growing television audiences have assisted the game's development and made it more recognisable and accepted by a much wider population:

When you have the Women's World Cup and everyone was watching, people that didn't watch women's football were suddenly involved. So I think the profile has lifted. Then you've got the W-League now and ABC broadcasts. If you look at the FFV web site there are definitely more equal reports with the men and women. Once upon a time we had gotten nowhere near talking about women's football. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

I think until we started going to the World Cup and actually playing some really good football and people actually watching it on TV, and saying god these girls have got some skills, not just going down to the park and seeing C grade females kick the ball around and miskick and that type of stuff. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

Oh, they've got sponsorship, they've got a better kind of wage system where they can dedicate themselves to training, you know, in a team atmosphere for whatever time, you know. They've got an Australian League now you know and they play a lot higher better competition than we ever played. So yeah, it's moving forward, I still believe there's a long way to go. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

There are an awful lot more people out there that know about women's football, than there ever has been before. I think we need to choose our role models really well and make sure they are out there and amongst it. I don't think we should fight battles that we will never win. That is one of the challenges, making sure the right

people are making the right decisions and pushing the right goals for us to achieve. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

Now there are so many girls playing. You have so many girls wanting to play football. I see that massive change in mindset that it is a good sport for girls to be involved in. I think that comes from exposure on TV, international competition. But to see parents encouraging the girls, it is no longer seen as a butch type sport. It is seen as a good team sport as an option to netball. I have seen a lot more support for it than there used to be. (Jane Natoli 24/7/12)

It has been recognised – there is a competition called The Total Girls Tournament. Total Girls is a girls' magazine and that started off with lots of little kids playing with pink soccer balls and it has become a huge competition every year and it is about social football that is massive now. Things like that are really impressive as far as being accepted and the girls themselves wanting to be part of something with other girls, little girls. Everything at a lower level, small-sided football, all the small stuff for young kids. It is all for boys and girls together. That will carry it through and make it much better later on. They all grow up, now it's not a men's game any more. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

And from a male player's perspective, John comments on his recent experience in the men's veteran competition:

The club I play at in the veterans, they have a lot of junior girls' teams and women, and they're not treated any differently as far as I can tell in terms of getting facilities to train and the ground availability and that sort of stuff.

A Victorian perspective

Maggie is currently involved with the FFV women's committee and historical committee and has a long history in the administration of the women's game in Victoria. Maggie shares her view on how the game has changed in Victoria and how the women's game has finally achieved acceptance within the state football culture:

We slowly found, just over that short period, say 2002 to 2006, more and more clubs were happy to have the girls play against them. They recognised the skill

because it was an elite squad. They recognised these girls could actually play and they didn't mind, they were quite happy to support it. So in a short space of time it started to grow acceptance quite quickly. For example women playing 1st division other people saw that women could actually play the game, it became more and more accepted in some clubs. Some clubs embraced a team and supported them, some clubs even looked after the women better than the men, which was good, because the women's team was more successful. A lot of it was based on skill and success rather than the fact that females were players. It was an interesting turn around, mindset with some clubs. With women's it seems to have come from junior girls, older women coming into leagues progress up the ladder because you get more support from that club. As opposed to women's teams that have started in a men's club. They shouldn't call them men's clubs really, they are just clubs these days. I think a lot of the men now are coming on board. They really have to accept men, women, boys and girls it's all part of one big game.

It is changing, definitely these days compared to 20 years ago it is a massive amount of progress as far as acceptance goes. Women again coming through from the juniors that they feel that they are part of the sport anyway, they are not necessarily aware there is a big difference between the boys and girls. Women started to make inroads within clubs and then the Women's Premier League became part of the Federation and then our game was played before the men's Premier League Grand Final and people accepted it more. People were actually able to see women play football.

In the football world, women have far more recognition than they used to have. It is more than lip service, people have done the right thing by the women, a lot of people genuinely want to improve women's football and make it bigger. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

I think Victoria is doing a better job than the FFA as far as females go. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

Nicky recalls an experience that highlights how much has changed in the acceptance of women footballers:

I was working for the FFV, or the VSF as they were then, the Victorian Soccer Federation, and I was doing soccer clinics in schools. Now what I really noticed in a short period of time was when I first started doing that, so it was probably in the early 1990's or maybe even the mid 1990's, I'd go into a school and all the boys would go 'but you're a girl', 'girls don't play soccer' and 'what would you know' and you know 'girls don't play that'. And you'd do a few tricks and by the time you'd finish they'd be like oh ok. Now across a two year period which I think is when the juniors, like the junior girls' league was starting to get off the ground, there was a lot more exposure about girls playing soccer. I probably did that job for three or four years and when I finished I'd go into a school and there was absolutely no comment about the fact that I was female. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

Theresa acknowledges that society is changing and that women can achieve at anything that they set their minds to:

I think society understands the role women can play in any sport, the outlook has changed because we now have the next generation of women who are playing and their children are not taught that you can't do this. They are taught you can do anything that you like.

What about the pioneers?

Barbara Cox and Richard Pringle's (2011) research into the emergence of the female footballer in New Zealand highlighted the lack of attention paid to those women who laid the foundation for the growth of the women's game.

Little is known about how the pioneering footballers in the early 1970s manoeuvred their way into playing a so-called man's sport and how, therefore, they set the scene for football to become a mainstream female sport. (Cox and Pringle 2011, p. 219)

The women who have been prominent in the development of the women's game in Australia speak strongly about the importance of recognising the pioneers. Theresa, Heather, Nicky and Debbie believe that the efforts of those who went before them and worked to bring women's football to where it is today, have not been suitably recognised or acknowledged. A history of the

women's game needs to include all women who have been involved in the development of the game at all levels and should not be restricted to the elite. Theresa remarks 'we wouldn't be here having this conversation if it wasn't for those who pioneered the game':

Those people I remember as really strong pioneers of the game and they were the ones who pushed the limits and really put women's soccer on the map, so to speak. Even though in this day and age people don't recognise the work that those people actually did. To bring the game so it can be played today and they are not remembered like they should be as far as I am concerned. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

I wouldn't be who I am if it wasn't for the people and the acquaintances and friendships and the situations that I have been in along the way. So I have high admiration for any woman in soccer that has a small part to play. Everybody should be recognised today. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

The whole administration of women's football in Victoria was run totally by Betty Hoar, basically out of her house and to that effect FFV acknowledged her. We wouldn't be sitting down having this conversation, . . . because she started everything. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

Heather believes that she would not have achieved so much if not for the people who came before her:

I couldn't have done this without inspiration from people going way back to you know Elaine Watson and others who were involved in the game in the 1970s and the 1980s.

Nicky strongly supports the acknowledgement of the history of women's football and the recognition of those who were involved in the development of the game:

I'd also really like you know those champions to have some recognition, people like Carolyn, like Jane Oakley, Debbie Nichols, Jeanette Melvyn, Tracey Hodge.

There's a whole lot of people who really dedicated their lives and careers to women's football and the development of women's football. But because they're no longer necessarily involved and there's not been that documented history that stuff has kind of got lost and that's really unfortunate. Because I think there's been, you know, they championed the cause. They helped make it what it is today . . . Each generation before says they pave the way but I think what the men's game does fairly well is they had that recognition and the women's game is just starting to catch up from that perspective. So if nothing else, I guess that's what I'd like to champion as best we can is that those founders and those people who went before, whether it's at elite level or just that club administrator that supported that team all the way through over a long period of time that there was recognition for that. That'd be significant and I think without the Maggies, the Bettys, the Therasas, you lose that history . . . and that's a bit sad I think. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

Debbie believes that while FFV is very good at recognising today's Matildas, they remain lacking when it comes to involving the women who were involved in the earlier years of the game in Victoria. Some of the contemporary stars could do more to raise the profile of those who pioneered the game:

Whether the Victorian Football Association has ever jumped on news about some of the veterans, they are very good with today's stars, they are brilliant. But I don't know if they have called upon some of the players that came before, that led the foundations to be more involved. There are a couple that are involved, Maggie Koumi and Theresa Deas who is heavily involved and I have played with Theresa, but I think a lot of players who were very very good and did a lot for women's football have just walked away and not had the opportunity to put anything back in. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

While little is known about the pioneering women of football in Australia and their stories have yet to be added to the history of the sport, there have been some steps taken to rectify this position. FFA has acknowledged three of the women interviewed for this research by inducting them into the Hall of Fame. Elaine Watson (1999), Betty Hoar (2000), Theresa Deas (2003) and Heather Reid (2007). (Football Federation Australia 2015)

Elaine comments on her contribution to the women's game and what it meant to her to be involved:

I'm just glad that I was available when I was available. Because I think it was my input from the beginning that was very much needed. Even though later on you know I realise you do better this way and do it better that way. But there always has to be someone that leads the way and I consider that I was lucky to go in at that time and have the space and the direction to promote the code the way it was promoted. I was happy to be a part of it and I'm not the only one that had good ideas. You've already spoken to a couple of others and Betty Hoar was one of the early ones and Theresa Jones she was then, and I met such a wide range of lovely people that wanted to work for the good of everyone and I think that's the best part about it. (Elaine Watson 3/9/12)

Sharon acknowledges that it is important to remember the past and to meet with the new Matildas so that who went before and their stories are not lost to the current generation of women players:

I got invited to the Hall of Fame presentation two years ago and there were a couple of the young Matildas there, but because I don't follow it so closely I wouldn't know them if they walked past me in the street you know what I mean and they probably wouldn't know us either. But it's good when you get invited to those things so you can mix and just talk about, you know, where we've come from to now. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

Sharon believes that those women who were selected to be part of the early Australian teams (who were forced to raise their own funding to travel and play) should be recognised as well:

But a lot of people put a lot of sacrifices on the line back before that you know, just to represent and play against different countries and go over to different countries and have these series that I was talking about with Julie Dolan, and those type of things. A lot of money was spent touring with that as well and that should have been, they should have been recognised I thought. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

While FFA has acknowledged those women mentioned above, the women feel that there is still much to be done to recognise all of those who have worked to build the foundations of the women's game in Australia. They agree that 'the pioneering footballers' stories have been typically hidden from the official eyes of history' (Cox and Pringle 2011).

The FFA Hall of Fame was established in 1999 to pay tribute to Australia's football greats and to recognise exceptional achievements of players, coaches, referees, administrators and media representatives. While some 200 nominees have been recognised, women make up only 6% of those honoured. (Downes, Syson and Hay 2015) However it is the only football code that recognises women across all categories. (Stell 2013) The state football authorities have taken similar actions in recognising individual achievements including women.

Achievement and Success

Women's football in Australia has had many successes and has achieved much since its inception. The game has come a long way and has, as historians Hay and Murray (2014) argue, 'become established as a national and international and high-participation sport' in Australia. While there is still some way to go in achieving equal status with the men's game there are many stories of success and achievement left unheard. These victories are not only realised on the fields of international competition but are experienced throughout all participatory levels of the game. The women interviewees come from a wide cross-section of the football community and are pleased to be provided with another opportunity to voice their stories of success and celebration.

Playing for your State and Country

For many of the women involved, selection for either your home state or Australia, provides the most memorable experiences:

Getting the name out there you know and actually being recognised for representing your country because people didn't recognise it, they didn't understand women's soccer, what's that you know. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

What stands out, I think when I got my first NSW jersey and my first game was against Northern NSW, in Adelaide, the Nationals. I scored a nice goal, hit it sweetly just outside the eighteen yard box and I will never forget it. (Dalys Carmody 19/6/12)

I think there was one claim to fame. I think even one stage they beat Brazil and that was unheard of as we were a bunch of misfits. It was hard for the National team to train together because some were from Melbourne some were from Canberra, Brisbane. All over the place. (Dalys Carmody 19/6/12)

I guess, after the Nationals when you are at a dinner, I guess you know when you get your name read out that you made the National squad that is pretty special. You go and ring mum and dad up – it is pretty special. (Dalys Carmody 19/6/12)

I can remember when we went over to Perth. It was all so exciting, it was such a big deal. Three little country girls off to play in the Aussie Championships. I will always remember it. You just don't forget things like that. Just winning the Grand Final was really neat as well. You play the Grand Final at Oaks Oval and that was big time here. Even then, men's teams would come and watch. (Nell Perry 3/12/12)

Obviously my debut for Australia against Brazil in the pilot World Cup in China was pretty memorable and winning three championships at State level. There are millions of stories involved in all of them. It has been a wonderful journey so far. I can't complain. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

Making the Australian team in 1989, which like I never thought I would. I started late and that was pretty amazing. Um, going to Japan with the Matilda's, that was pretty memorable and just basically a lot of people that I've met have become lifelong friends, that's probably the most. (Carolyn Monk 23/7/12)

Paul, in his capacity of past-National Executive Director of the Australian Women's Soccer Association (AWSA), recalls the national team qualifying for the World Cup in 1995 as a major achievement:

I mean obviously things like getting into the World Cup. I mean that's a pretty big achievement. Then I just think general sorts of achievements. I feel comfortable enough saying that I've left the game or women's side of the game in a better state, that is to say that it has gone forward. (Paul Turner 19/7/12)

Sharon remembers an emotional victory over New Zealand, which remains special to her, as her father was a spectator on the day. Sharon was part of the first Australian team to attempt to qualify for the inaugural FIFA Women's World Cup, which was to be held in Sweden in 1991:

In outdoor it would have to be when we won against New Zealand and we were back in the race to qualify for the World Cup. I at that point I'd never seen my dad cry and he ran down to the fence and he gave me the biggest hug he's ever given me and just handed me the Australian flag and we ran across the field and it was

just yeah, I will never ever forget that.... I suppose the acceleration for women's soccer because there was finally a World Cup, not just the Australian team playing a country that came over. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

Betty and Heather believe that the greatest levels of achievement can be seen in the development of the women's game itself, while others have individual moments that remain with them:

I think the biggest success is what Mick's related in the fact, the girls now in the premier league division have as much right as the premier league men and they have to be treated exactly the same. That is a big, big plus. (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

But yeah I mean I think just seeing a handful of women going from ten teams and no junior girls through to now where we've got probably 5,500 girls and women playing the sport is a tremendous thing and very, very inspiring and motivating for me. (Heather Reid 31/7/13)

Elaine is proud of her many achievements. She has been recognised by the Queensland Association as the only recipient of a dual life-membership. Her achievements as an administrator mark the importance of her contribution to the development of the women's game in Australia:

I was on the Brisbane Executive at that stage, which were men, women and juniors and all amalgamated. Life member of the Queensland Association, which also then became combined men, women and juniors. So I am the only dual life member they've had, life member of the men and life member of the women and then they amalgamated and the CEO rang me to ask which of my life memberships I would like to surrender and I told him neither. I was going to use the second one to come back and haunt them if they didn't do the right thing (laughter) (Elaine Watson 3/9/12)

But Ian Brusasko, when he invited me onto the men's committee, I think that was a big step towards acceptance of women in the sport. Ian very nicely said to the newspaper that I was the best administrator that he'd ever struck and I think that went a long way. (Elaine Watson 3/9/12)

The simple pleasures experienced at presentation nights and receiving a trophy for your efforts throughout the year, victories in grand finals and the celebrations after success were often the best memories:

Winning a grand final in 1984, extra time won two to one. Going through undefeated and the Rous said if we went through undefeated they'd put on a keg for us. We went down but they didn't give us the keg but they gave us wine and whatever and I remember being very sick and all the players dancing on the tables. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

Presentation night was always really good, and back then you would have a live band, you would get dressed up and have your presentations. Callan and Pa would wear a kilt to the presentations. Getting a trophy was neat too after you had worked hard. I got most consistent quite a few times. There was one season I scored over 50 goals. It would never happen now, because the standard of play is better. (Nell Perry 3/12/12)

In recognition of representation – The Commemorative Cap

Some of the women who represented their country at the highest level recalled the importance of receiving a commemorative cap from FFA. The occasion provided these players with recognition and an acknowledgement of their individual achievements. Previous national representative players were presented with caps to recognise individual contributions to the national team and their role in women's football in Australia:

That was actually, that was the first thing that Soccer Australia had ever done for us, actually that was a real nice touch. That was before a double header in the Women's W League and it was at Leichardt Oval. It was a pity they couldn't get everyone there. It was a nice reunion of some of the girls who played. They actually gave us a few drinks, a wrap – a little sandwich, nice salad. We never ever got much from Soccer Australia. Julie Dolan presented me with the cap, which I was thoroughly happy about because in my eyes she is number one. She is probably the icon of women's soccer. There are a few of them, she would be one of them. Cindy Heyden probably another one and another girl called Kim

Lembryk. They were just phenomenal players to me. She presented me with my cap. I was pretty chuffed about that. (Dalys Carmody 19/6/12)

While Sharon believes that the caps are a great way to recognise those who played for Australia, she is concerned that not all women who have represented their country have been recognised:

I think the biggest thing they brought in is the caps, you know you get a number for your cap for when you came into the league but there's been controversy about that where they're not recognising everyone....My caps began in the '91 World Cup side not back when I was playing at 19.... I mean my number is 65 and so they say ok I was the 65th person to wear the gold jumper, or the green and gold where that's not right, because I wore it back when I was 19 and some other players even missed out and didn't get a cap because they weren't recognised in that era.

Belinda's story

Belinda reminisces about her story of achievement and success at the 2007 World Cup and 2008 Olympic games and how she was accepted by the elite women coaches and made feel welcome at the highest level of the game. She comments on how this had a positive impact on her future in the game and what it meant to her to finally achieve a childhood dream. Belinda believes that the attitudes displayed by the elite women coaches in welcoming her to the meeting would not have been experienced in a similar situation in the men's game.

Oh, my first World Cup in China in 2007 and then the Olympic games in 2008. Just a young girl coming from Byron Bay who had an interest in football being in that environment was mind blowing. Yeah, I was amongst some of the best female and male coaches within the game and to be sitting in a room full of female coaches at that time who had not only represented their country as players but also as coaches and won major tournaments was unbelievable. I still remember sitting around the round table as such and everyone introducing themselves. It was pretty intimidating, by the time they got to me I hadn't played for Australia and I'd come, I'd been involved in the women's game for a while but at a very, very

grass roots level compared to these girls. So in that environment it was, the only reason I'm here is because of a political reason. AFC wanted someone to represent them, blah blah blah, but if it had of been the men's game it would have been total shutdown. But in the women's game, especially at the moment they saw that, they identified with it and they took me under their wing, and until this day those relationships are still there and I chat to them every other week regarding different football scenarios. They're the ones who told me I should go home and start coaching a team and push myself. (Belinda Wilson 12/2/13)

I still remember as a five year old watching the Olympics for the very first time and turning around to mum and said I want to be there one day. It was as an athlete but that didn't work out so to be there, to be a part of it, to be involved with it and to see it, it's an amazing experience. That's how all the BS that I went through in terms of in the administration and whatever hardships I've had, it didn't matter at that point in time because of that experience, to be there. I still remember walking down the Great Wall of China and running into the Australian diving team and just seeing Australia written on the back of the shirts, knowing that I was at the Olympics, it was just fantastic. (Belinda Wilson 12/2/13)

Downplaying achievements

While many of the women interviewed are very proud of their achievements, some are modest about their individual successes and often downplay their importance. Dalys provides an example of this reaction when discussing her ability and selection to the Australian team:

I didn't go far in my elite level, just to Brisbane.

I probably didn't have the skill level of some of the other girls, but the fact that I was so fit, because I trained that much harder, that would be one thing.

Even today in her current employment Dalys is reluctant to acknowledge her individual level of success:

I currently work in a sports shop. Some girls, young kids would come in. I ask the kids "are you going to be the next Matilda" and I don't like them saying it, but my bosses would say, one is serving you right now. They would say "Ohhh you

played for Australia”? I don’t like that, because I don’t feel, repping one year to me doesn’t cut it, but to these kids “that would be unreal”.

The game has seen many changes over the past decade and women have been largely accepted into the football culture. Yet some examples of women’s achievements in the game not being recognised remain and, are often trivialised. This seems to be the case in Dalys’ example. Although Dalys has displayed determination, dedication and strong character traits in achieving national representation in the game, she downplays her successes. While this may seem like humility, Dalys is conforming to a social expectation that women’s achievements in male-dominated sport are often seen as less important. While Dalys commented on the positive aspects of male involvement in her football career, her contribution to football was during a period when women’s involvement was in its infancy and football was seen mainly as a men’s game.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Overcoming the Hardships

For two centuries Australian women have struggled against forthright opposition to their participation in sport. They have been trivialised, banned, excluded, ignored, oppressed, degraded, unsung, discouraged – yet still they played on. (Stell 1991, p.viii)

Women's involvement in sport in Australia has come a long way since Marion Stell published the above words some twenty-four years ago. Women and girls are now much more active in all aspects of Australian sporting culture including the more traditional male dominated game of football. More women and girls are now involved in playing, coaching, refereeing and administration than in any time in the history of the game and those involved are increasingly recognised and acknowledged. Their engagement with football has been, and remains, subject to a degree of gender discrimination.

Recent research undertaken by Cox and Pringle (2011) indicates that studies undertaken by socio-historians and sport feminists in their research to highlight women's struggle to be involved in sport, reveal that female sport participants faced and still continue to face harassment, trivialisation, discrimination and homophobic prejudice in a manner that limits their sport participation choices. (Cox and Pringle 2011, p. 218)

The women interviewees reveal that while they are pleased with the greater acknowledgement of the game and an increasing recognition of their individual contributions and successes, it is important to acknowledge that these achievements were hard earned. The women have achieved despite hardship. They have faced and continue to face discrimination on a number of levels. This treatment has created a degree of bitterness amongst some of the women and a greater desire for the game and all involved to be treated equally.

Discrimination

The women interviewees have been subject to widespread gendered prejudice and discrimination ranging from the allocation of playing fields through to a lack of financial and media support. While the game has reached a level where access to participation and the rights of women to play the game have improved, a level of discrimination remains. The game is still largely controlled, administered and dominated by men.

It's all about the men

Football in Australia has historically been viewed by the clubs and the administrators of the game as a male only sport. Those women who pioneered the game in Australia were often the subject of male prejudice and discrimination. This situation has improved but there are still examples of the women's game being subjected to actions based on perceived gender appropriateness. This is demonstrated in the initial, and in some cases, continual reactions of football clubs when confronted with women participating in a male-dominated sport. Cox and Pringle (2011) describe these women as having 'transgressed the normative and acceptable boundaries of femininity' by attempting to play the male game of football – It was all about the men:

Back in my day, women playing soccer, no that's a boy's sport (Dalys Carmody 19/6/12).

Football has only been here for 40 years, let alone girls playing, and they used to look at us sort of side ways and ask why are you playing that. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

We are talking a long time ago now, and football in my era was always looked at as a male sport. As it still is to an extent today. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

That's the problem and I think that was always the problem even like the old Australian Soccer Federation, a lot of it was almost was you know women's football's not really our core business, our core business is getting the men's team to qualify for a World Cup and I think that still is the case and in actual fact other

programs and other things sometimes suffer through the fact that they see that as being their core business. (Paul Turner 19/7/12)

Second class citizens – relegated to the back paddock

Many of the women commented on experiences in which they were made to feel like second class citizens. Football clubs often discriminated against women's football by relegating the women to the 'back paddock', refusing women's teams training space and diminishing senior women's teams to positions of unimportance, or as some of the women state, below that of the junior boys. The women (and men) interviewed felt very strongly about this level of discrimination, with experiences shared from those involved with junior football through to the national level:

A lot of that is still out there, where the women's team are still second, or third, or fourth-class citizens. We never were sure we were going to have the main field even though we were at the top level, and as I've said, the little tiny boys would get them over us. (Annette Hughes 24/7/12)

The Premier men would get, say two thirds of the field and we would have to train in this pokey corner. Why was that the case? Why couldn't we split that, even have a game together. (Dalys Carmody 19/6/12)

Way back when we first started we were over at Italo Stars grounds on Sunday afternoons and that was only because there were no men playing. So yeah we were put on the back burner there. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

It was always the men's teams and the youth, the junior boys were always given preference over grounds and training and that sort of stuff, and that's, I think a lot of clubs that wouldn't have changed greatly. (John Hughes 24/7/12)

But having the top premier league team in Victoria at the time and we'd be moved to a small, you know really smaller ground with no room because the under fourteen boys were on the main pitch so that was always hard to take. (John Hughes 24/7/12)

You would go to games where under fourteen boys would take precedence to the women. They would be shoved out the back park. When it comes up, and it did maybe four years ago when we had an incident at the club, where they wanted to play the boys' game and shift us to the small crappy pitch and it was funny because we hadn't seen that kind of thing for so long. We took for granted that everyone accepted equalness but it was a right bun fight that day to get the girls playing on the main pitch. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

At some clubs it's still women down below junior boys. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

Like a lot of clubs, they were just treated like sort of on the same level as the under 14 boys I guess. Just you know, let the girls have a game you know. (John Hughes 24/7/12)

The boys' team get everything and the girls', yeah ok we'll get it later on and how they sort the coaches I think often, yeah, ok, its only the girls, what's left? (Jane Natoli 24/7/12)

Well, I think women's sport in general has always been second-class to men's sport. Especially soccer, well not so much as especially soccer but it just a good example..... the men had a couple of catch up games and we had our own competition game to play, so of course we get relegated to the crappy field, for want of a better word, while the men who, it wasn't even a sanctioned game for them but they get the good field, and that is just an ordinary, normal example of women's sport. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

At club level, probably fairly similar, as far as a lot of the clubs go the men get the better ground to play on and the women will get the back paddock. That is still very much around. The women and junior girls will get a parent to coach them rather than a paid coach. They are always the second-class part of the club, in many clubs. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

Some of the women commented on the way the clubs were happy to reap the benefits of the women who were working in the behind the scenes roles such as canteen duty and making the club much needed resources.

But at Ringwood the club itself wanted all its money to go to their men's team that was playing miserably, so all they could do was pay players, they couldn't actually train and develop them. The women used to earn a lot of money in the canteen. The club wanted all the money but didn't want to support the women's team, wanted to shove them on the back paddock. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

The core of the girls at Dandenong City pretty much stayed together. We were there for quite a while until, I think it still happens today, when the focus is on the males playing football and not the females you just get a secondary, oh yeah the girls play! As we became better at what we were doing and we started to realize, a bit like women's rights in a way, that we had value and as women we were doing an awful lot of work around the club. When it first started off most of these women playing, were daughters, wives or girlfriends of the men in the Club. That is how we got a team together. Those people were also the canteen ladies and the strip washers and all of those so-called female roles at the club. As we became better and we were actually winning a lot more games and then winning leagues, I think there was a bit of an uprising and we decided we wanted to demand more out of this, and unfortunately at that particular Club they weren't prepared to give us what we were asking. What we were asking was no more than what they were doing for even the junior boys. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

Being a successful women's team did not necessarily guarantee club or parental support – particularly if the success came from beating a boys' team:

A lot of women's teams were like that, Heidelberg United, they had a successful women's team but they were always relegated to the back paddock, never seen as anything even though they were successful. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

We would go into clubs and if the girls beat the boys, we often found there was a lot of resentment there . . . That was always an interesting scenario, we use to get, I remember one club the parents, mums coming up to us and abusing us for letting the girls beat the boys. We shouldn't have allowed it. We should have let the boys win. This was back in early 2005 or 2006. That was the elite squad, NTC at the time, National Training Centre squad at the time. The boys' Super league is under 14s, so about the same size. That kind of attitude was around a little bit. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

Belinda recalls her experience at the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) where the same level of discrimination against a women's national representative team was apparent. This demonstrates that while there may have been improvements in the treatment of women in sport, there is still some way to go:

So I understand the reasons why there's a lot of attention spent on the men's game. But at the same time, and an example of that at the AIS with one field in particular. We couldn't use that field, that was for the AIS boys and the AIS boys only and I was like, hang on a minute, we're a national team. We're under seventeen but we're still a national team so we should be above the AIS boys, so why can't we use that field especially when it's not being used? Why do we have to go out in the crap field? So the standards although they're getting better, they're still. (Belinda Wilson 12/2/13)

Not all of the women interviewed shared negative comments on the clubs and how they treated women. Debbie described her experiences with some of the clubs that she was involved with:

From my own experiences, I have been probably, shouldn't say fortunate, shouldn't have to say that, but I think we have had a lot of respect in the clubs I have been involved with, as it has been very much a working together. I have noticed a lot of other clubs that don't get the same support even today and they are treated very much as second class and until the FFV really stepped in and started insisting that Women's Premier League were played on a certain pitch, like the No. 1 ground. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

What night is the right night?

Women's football competitions were often discriminated against by league administrators. A common concern was the scheduling and timing of women's games. Actions taken by the leagues often marginalised the game by making it difficult to grow and develop, reinforcing the male dominance of the sport. Helen describes her experiences as a player both on the Central Coast of NSW and the Gold Coast Queensland:

Back when we would play on a Friday night, in the middle of winter, who would want to come and watch a premier league game on the Central Coast at 7.30 at night, you've got to be joking, you wouldn't do it. Like if I wasn't playing I wouldn't be there.

Although I did question why we had to play on the Monday night at the Gold Coast. Because, they were often talking about trying to attract more players and I said "well if you had it on another night, any night but Monday would be good". Which I thought was better, because that was what most women said, I'm not playing on a Monday night, we were trying to get more people to play. Because in Sydney we always played on a Sunday morning, which was good, because you still had the afternoons for family and friends. But they still play on a Monday night. Just the argument they didn't want to give up the fields on a Monday. Then I said "why not play on a Tuesday or a Thursday night", but no the men train that night! Well that's the argument. That's the whole thing in a nutshell. (laughter)
(Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

Paying your own way

The lack of financial support and the hardships this created was a major issue of concern to the women interviewed. When compared to the level of financial support and player wages received by the men's game this difference resulted in the marginalisation of the women's game by making it difficult to participate and succeed. The women were also concerned about the general lack of understanding in the wider community and the administrators of the game about the difficulties the lack of financial support created for them:

Recognition and a lot of people don't realise it comes out of their pocket. For them to travel and they give up a lot. There is a lot of people would, their hairs would stand up on their head if they realised. I could guarantee the last World Cup which was women's world cup, and the girls got, I think to the quarters, I think they got beaten by Sweden in the end, they would have been broke, they would have gone over there with hardly any money and hardly any support. (Dalys Carmody 19/6/12)

So yeah, if you, if you want the team to be given the same standards as the men's A league for the women, we don't get that. The players are paid 100 bucks a week like for sixteen weeks, which doesn't cover petrol cause you're asking them to turn up four or five days a week. (Belinda Wilson 12/2/13)

We didn't have a lot of help, this possibly was a big problem. We had to do all our own fund raising and believe you me the chocolate drives we've done and all that sort of thing. It's cost Mick and I, well it's cost him a fortune, to send me overseas. (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

Money. Sponsorship. It all comes down to money I think. Obviously women have the ability, dedication. It's their equal treatment in terms of funds and money. It's hard to get sponsorship when you don't have the same avenues as the men have. You know the argument, they're not fast. But it's actually more enjoyable to watch sometimes when its not so fast. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

Louisa and Nicky commented on the gender divide between the men and women and while it is getting better there is still a way to go. Louisa reflects on the time when as a young girl the financial side of the sport was of little concern compared to when she became a young adult and the difference parental support can provide:

However, financially women's sport in general does not receive the same media and financial benefit as the men, which means most female athletes will need to work part-time or full-time to financially survive. Therefore, this is the biggest difference between the Australian support of men's and women's sport. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

It is becoming more equal but not equal enough. There is still a massive gap between the genders. Financially, sponsorship and prize money, things like that. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

I mean the payment structures for men are phenomenal yet some of the women are still in the Australian Team battling to be on a contract. So I think it's come a long way in regards to exposure but it's still got a fair way to go in regards to sponsorship and the equality unfortunately. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

Mum and Dad can drive you everywhere so you can switch off when you are a teenager. But when you are a female adult playing it is a lot different. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

Paying for overseas trips to represent your country was a major burden for the women:

I think I had to pay for all my trips, even my first two Australian tours I had to pay for, well you had to pay. (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

I mean we often say that you could have bought and sold a house in what it cost us in leave without pay. The Australian Indoor Team used to tour Brazil or South American countries and that was a two, three or four thousand dollar trip, you know it was \$500 to go for a week at the AIS, and you had to pay for your own gear. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

Basically most of the girls had to go overseas, like Julie Murray, Julie Dolan, had to go overseas and play to get money from different overseas girls' sides or even get selected in university sides over in America. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

I think it was only a government grant of about \$100, \$120 a week to a player for that '91 World Cup side and you know, you can't live on that. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

Debbie comments on the discrimination experienced by those women competing internationally when compared with the men:

When I used to play international, we would contribute to our costs and for every state tournament in those twenty years we had to pay for ourselves. That would be the only thing where we were treated differently, because if the men went away for an international they certainly wouldn't have paid. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

In some cases the women commented on the situations where lack of finances often resulted in women being unable to play. This sometimes meant that the best were not always selected for representative honours. Only those

that could afford to pay or had parents willing enough to pay for them could play:

Basically it got to the stage and at one stage it got to the stage if kids couldn't afford to pay they couldn't play. But we tried to avoid that and I noticed three girls that owe money to the Association from years back, where were they going to get the money from, and it just cost us an awful lot of fund raising. (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

Yeah but it did mean that we were not getting the best players we could only really sometimes get the players whose parents could afford to let them go and play. (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

Back in my day sometimes girls were picked, and even before my days, they might have been picked on who could afford to go, rather than, who had the most talent. Maybe back then, there might have been a little bit of politics about that, maybe I thought some of the girls who should have been picked weren't picked, but maybe there were reasons. (Dalys Carmody 19/6/12)

Lisa's experience at an FFA award presentation demonstrates the lack of understanding of the financial hardships faced by the women who represented Australia and how this level of discrimination marginalised those women with aspirations of achieving at the highest level:

I was at the awards the other week and they obviously, I highlighted that the women the majority of the time had to pay for their stuff and things like that and they gave Alison Forman who won the award you know well done and congratulations etc etc. Then the male who was inducted into the hall of fame, Scott Chipperfield seems like a great guy, you know he's very modest, he doesn't go seeking attention and things like that, and then he was awarded his medal and then after he was awarded the medal I was flabbergasted by Col Patterson how the MC for SBS just basically was about to fall on his knees and praise the guy because he had once taken out of his own pocket to fly back to Australia and play for the Socceroos. And it was sort of like, hang on, this is what women have been doing for most of their careers and yet an individual player has done it once and you're just about to idolise him, you know there always seems to be a complete, I

don't know, a miss, there is no, the respect is not the same. (Lisa Casagrande 11/12/12)

Theresa describes the difficulties associated with fundraising and how the women often had to rely on the family and community as well as having to hold down a number of jobs just to be able to stay in the game:

To go and knock on someone's door and say 'Hi I'm Theresa, I'm in the National team or in a State team could you sponsor me some money, so I can go overseas', it was really difficult. Really, really difficult, so I had to rely an awful lot on the local community that was around me to be able to help me and support me and work my bottom off to pay for everything, along with my parents obviously initially. I couldn't ask them to pay for everything all the time. It wasn't in me to do that, so at one point I was working three jobs. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

Helen agrees about the need for women to work to play and sees this as one of the main reasons the standard of play is perceived to be below that of the men's game:

It is all amateur and people say the women are at a much lower standard, well that is because there is very few that can actually play professionally to keep that standard up high where the men can make a huge career out of it and they are playing all the time. They can maintain that level because they don't have to go out and work as well, or even raise their own funds to go to competitions, where a lot of the women's comps are. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

The lack of financial support was also evident in the unavailability of insurance for the women players:

Just prior to the exams I sustained a dislocated knee cap and I sat my VCE exams with my leg in a cast on a seat. There was no compensation for anybody doing any sport, particularly a girl doing a male sport at that particular point in time. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

Louisa recalls her experiences of playing in Germany and China where the level of financial support was much higher for women, and how the little things can make such a big difference:

Clubs get great support from their respective governing body overseas and players will not have to pay their club registration and can gain personal sponsors, accommodation, a car, petrol allowance and insurance for the players. Little things like this make a big difference. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

Comparing my personal experience of having played in three different countries (Australia, Germany and China) I have always paid (my own registration) to play in Australia apart from at a W-League level. Whilst in Germany and China I did not have to pay a registration fee; insurance and accommodation covered. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

Maggie's comment goes to the very heart of the issue:

Finance is the biggest challenge. Money. Getting players to be paid to play.
(Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

What is it with Coaching?

Recent research into women's involvement in football has begun to address aspects of the game in which strongholds of gender discrimination work to prevent women entering into positions of authority and leadership, such as coaching (Fielding-Lloyd 2011; Welford 2011)

Welford's (2011) research indicates that 'in football, a sport which is historically associated with men and masculinity, that coaching is predominantly occupied by men, even when the participants are female' (Welford 2011, p.371). The research claims that the movement of women into leadership and decision-making roles such as coaching is a particularly significant challenge to the male dominance of sport.

The interviews with the women involved in the coaching aspect of football seem to support this argument. They describe a difference of acceptance between being a player and aspiring to be a coach. While some were acknowledged and respected as players they were also patronised and discriminated against as a coach.

It was only when I started coaching I think I was more patronised by the men because often I would go to coaching clinics and I would often be the only female, they were a bit more patronising then, but never as a player. I was always treated the same as everybody else. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

Jo Welford (2011) argues in her article, 'Tokenism, ties and talking too quietly: women's experiences in non-playing football roles', that:

It is the gendered practices within these courses that reproduce this male dominance. Women can be disengaged from coaching in practice by the kinds of behaviours that are encouraged – behaviours that are tied to traditional understandings of men and masculinity (Welford 2011, p.372).

Jane's favourite story

Jane's story demonstrates the difficulties faced by some women in their attempt to access the heavily male dominated arena of coaching including intimidation, inadequacy, abuse, sexual discrimination and marginalisation.

Jane is aggrieved at the level of discrimination she experienced in her attempt to become qualified as a coach – a position that she was originally asked to occupy due to her experience in teaching:

It's only because I'm a Phys. Ed. teacher they asked me to coach because I hadn't played before. The coaching courses I did didn't help because I don't feel, the first coaching course I ever did, that was back in the late '90's I think, this is my favourite story:

I was with thirty guys and me and I think there was one other female and he was giving out all the tasks for the next day for the assessment, and it was you know, kicking, goal keeping, instep pass, trapping and he looked at me and he went Jane . . . ironing, and that was, I just went – that was my, so I thought nup, never doing another coaching course. Ironing? Ironing! (laughter) cause I was a female in amongst guys and there weren't, like there weren't many, still weren't many, hardly a female coach even though that was only fifteen years ago.

Anyway, so about five years later I thought no, I'll do a youth coaches course. It was supposed to be female only and I got there and there weren't enough females to do it so there were two of us again and it was the worst four days I've ever spent. It was just so intimidating with all these males, you know, and people taking the course bowed down to these because they were premier league players and . . . I just hated it. I feel, I'm a teacher and I'm used to talking and instructing. I'm a Phys Ed teacher, but being with all those males in this coaching, feeling totally out of depth, oh I'm shit, so it's not worth me doing and I'm terrible at it, so that's why I don't coach any more. Cause you have to keep doing courses and I really hate them, and I'm very at home in front of kids (laughter), not in that situation.

The discrimination experienced by Jane at the coaching courses has led to a disengagement with this aspect of football. The feelings of intimidation and

inadequacy experienced by Jane in the company of the male-driven tasks left her feeling marginalised even though she had been coaching for some time:

I've told people since and no one can believe it and I don't think it would happen now. The coaching courses were terrible. I would fully go to a female one again but never a male one. (Jane Natoli 24/7/12)

The intimidation continued when Jane was the only female responsible for boys' teams. Masculine behaviour traits exhibited by the male coaches in being loud, bullish and bragging placed Jane in a position of unease. The behaviour amplified Jane's feelings of inadequacy and lack of confidence while promoting the dominant male and reinforcing the coaching status quo:

Especially if you're with the boys' team which I was a few times, you're the only female, usually amongst a whole room of males, and that doesn't bother me, we get on well but I get on well with most people but it is intimidating especially when a lot of them like to brow beat what I've done and this is what I've done in the past.

When the boys and I go away with the twelve and under there are three guys and me. It's just the way it is. I'm used to it. But I don't feel uncomfortable, but there's time, I mean it is fairly intimidating especially if you weren't that confident, it's intimidating.

That once I had an issue with and an argument with because I, it was with the juniors as well and he didn't agree. He was playing his best team and a couple of boys were left on the bench. I was with the girls' team and I just said something to him that this was a twelve and under championship not an all girl championship and the boys, they should all be getting a go. There was a boy in tears on the sidelines, you know, don't you think he should be getting a run? I'm not a confrontational person but don't you think you should give them some time? He didn't like it. (Jane Natoli 24/7/12)

Jane argues that women in general are made to feel inadequate by the masculine behaviour traits exhibited by some coaches. As a result women lack the necessary confidence to enter the realms of such a high-powered

male domain. Jane believes that women are more likely to stand back and let the men take the leading role, 'Well I'm probably not as good you, so you do it'. This reinforces the dominant masculine in coaching and continues to marginalise women in the game by making them feel like outsiders in the sport rather than competent contributors.

Research undertaken by Beth Fielding-Lloyd and Lindsey Mean (2011), 'I don't think I can catch it': women, confidence and responsibility in football coach education' found that women were unconfident in their own skills and abilities, and that this led to the women framing themselves as responsible for the gendered inequities in football coaching. The (English) Football Association (FA) has claimed this to be the most prominent reason for the provision of women-only coach education courses (Fielding-Lloyd & Mean 2011, p. 350):

Um but that's probably more ourself and I think females they don't know, most females, I don't want to speak out of turn, tend to be more stand back and go well I'm probably not as good as you so you do it, that's what I would think. I think that's probably more a barrier with females than, it's not a lot of yeah, that's what I think, it's more the self confidence in the female that would stop her saying I'm such a good sportsperson, I know I can do it, yeah, to me that's where it was.
(Jane Natoli 24/7/12)

Jean Williams (2003) highlights the level systematic sexism of FA in its treatment of women in football coach education. In 1997 an Employment Tribunal found FA guilty of discriminating against Vanessa Hardwick by failing her on two occasions in her final assessment for the Advanced Coaching Licence, 'despite the growing popularity of football among women, 1,105 men and seven women hold the Advanced Coaching Licence' (Williams 2003, p.139).

No pathway and no job opportunity

Nicky is an ex-Matilda and qualified coach with experience in coaching boys' representative teams:

I coached for a while and I coached at a good level and like I have the equivalent of the B Licence, in the modern terminology and I coached boys for a long time, and I coached elite boys. I did development squads and State teams. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

As a qualified coach operating in the men's game, Nicky faces moments of intimidation, bullying and confrontation. She has traversed the gendered boundary by successfully completing her coaching qualifications and is further challenging the male-dominated aspect of coaching with the elite boys' teams. The intimidation felt by the men coaches can be seen as a type of defence against the challenges to the long-held male dominance in coaching:

As a person paving the way for women coaches in a male dominated environment that certainly was taxing and I was very happy to walk away and not be involved in any capacity for a long time. And I still find there are some men who are intimidated by me as a woman 'cause I can hold my own in a soccer conversation. You know you learn a lot along the way.

So when I was coaching elite boys' teams, that men were intimidated by the fact that I was well qualified and I knew what I was doing and that I had, I always had my players respect from my boys but not sometimes their parents. And culturally I had a stint at the Melbourne Knights Football Club and they were very confronted by a female in a male role. And a good female who took their elite team to a good result and it was a dreadful experience.

I had a number of run-ins with male coaches who tried to bully me and stand over and intimidate me because I was a woman, and really you just go guys, like we should just work alongside each other.

The lack of coaching opportunity and the associated cost of acquiring the necessary skills to succeed in coaching has restricted Nicky's ongoing participation. The lack of a professional coaching pathway for women and the lack of potential employment opportunities in the game have added to the

barriers facing women and marginalised those who are trying to enter this male enclave of football:

There's a few new people who know females who are involved in the game at elite level and there is a pathway now for retiring Matildas to get involved in coaching. I'd have welcomed that with open arms but unfortunately that wasn't around when I was retiring and becoming a coach. I had to pay and I think what's unfortunate these days, it's great that they've got the licensing but to progress my licence it's going to cost me about \$15,000. There's no incentive for me to pay that money because I can't coach at a high level unless I'm coaching at elite level and I can't afford to pay \$15,000 and take six or seven weeks off work to be upgraded and to go to the workshops and so it's a catch 22. I'm really restricted in that and look that would be also for male coaches but there are more job opportunities for men than women, and that's the most senior pathway in the country.

I loved coaching, I really challenged myself in the male environment and I deliberately wanted to test myself against the men. While I may not have got recognition for that, personal satisfaction I went yeah, I can, I did my qualification with Ange Postecoglou. So you know, you look at the level that Ange is coaching now and I go you know what, I can coach like he can and I could still coach like he can except he's a man and he's got a pathway and a job opportunity and I'm a woman and I don't.

I was very well qualified and easily could have done the job but because I was female I certainly wasn't given the opportunity and that's unfortunate. I think, that is still what happens in the game and you know men are accepted as coaches in women's sport yet women aren't accepted as coaches in men's sport. So from that perspective I think they're very much second-class citizens although community perception and people wanting to watch the game is incredibly different.

Applying for the coach's job

The number of women coaching in football is minimal and attempting to break into the field is difficult. Helen believes that women need to be better than the men to obtain a coaching position and adopts a unique approach when applying for such positions:

Men are just automatically seem to be chosen for coaching, so you actually have to be, not just as good as, but better than them to get a job, if you wanted a proper job as a coach. Not as a player. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

Another attitude for women in sport was applying for different jobs to different places, to be a professional coach if I could. I never put down Helen Thomas it was always just H. Thomas because they would automatically assume I was a man and if I got a letter back or an email it was Dear Mr. Thomas because they just assumed I was a bloke. Especially in Europe or in England, in America it didn't matter so much because women's football has to have 50% of all the funding now and there is lots of women's coaches over there and in universities, so I did apply for a couple before I had my accident. As I said in England, I made sure I wouldn't put down Mrs. Thomas or Helen Thomas because it would be automatically discarded (laughter) I think. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

Helen positioned herself as a male applicant in order to be considered for a position in coaching. While Helen is comfortable with her female identity, for her to be considered for such a role, she needs to allow the ruling authorities to assume that she is a male applicant. Helen believes that reinforcing the status quo of the male dominated culture is one of the few options open to her in her pursuit to join the ranks of football coaches.

Bad feelings

Some of the women described the influence that certain male coaches had on their careers. Some decisions left these women with bad memories of the treatment they received:

I was fine with certain coaches, but there was a very big gap between when I was nineteen representing and actually getting in the side when I was twenty seven because of certain male influences that didn't like either my style or whatever and till that person got out of the scene with that I was never selected again. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

This might sound very cynical, but I believe that a number of the male coaches that were coaching National teams at that particular point of time, weren't in it for the good of the women's game, they were in it only for their own benefit. A lot of them thought that it might lead them to other jobs within the men's game. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

There was a lot of inconsistency and particularly if a coach came from a particular State there seemed to be a lot of bias towards those people from that State and it wasn't due to the fact that there was no money to bring people into camp, because we all paid for everything ourselves anyway. It was more that it was easier for them to see those people in their particular State and not have to worry so much about what else was out there. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

I don't know why, he didn't really approach me or talk to me and I felt that my career came to an abrupt end simply because he was appointed into the position and he was very focused on Sydney based players. I have a bit of regret as to the end of my career. I still think I had a couple of years left in me, but then, that's me, I'm probably biased about my own career. Maybe he was correct. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

I don't do it for the money, because I wouldn't be If you were a male you would get a lot more. I know what male coaches get paid. I used to know what the male coaches got paid at Casey compared to me. That would be the only difference is the pay scale is still there. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

A male coach in a women's game

The experiences of a male coach in the women's game provide a useful contrast.

John's position as a male coach of a young women's team places him in a position where he can potentially challenge restrictive gendered practices. John is an example of the 'supportive male' and is attempting to break down the barriers of marginalisation by encouraging young women to play and enjoy football. Men who coach women's sport teams are often placed in awkward positions, and questions will be asked as to the motive of the male's involvement. Is he there for his own personal gain or for the improvement of

the women's game? John is the husband of one of the women interviewees and acknowledges that there are many differences and challenges in dealing with women and young girls.

John is confronted with comments which challenge the role of a male coach in a women's game and his role in challenging sexual discrimination by others:

Well in coaching most people, well most guys that I spoke to that I played with it would be all sort of nudge, nudge, wink, wink sort of thing and do you get to go in the changing rooms and all that sort of stuff. (John Hughes 24/7/12)

John recognises that women and girls often approach the game differently from men and 'incorporate their own meanings into their activities'. They are more concerned with being connected as part of a team and the importance of having fun (Scraton et al. 1999, p.107):

My last season I think more than half the team was under eighteen, they were girls, fifteen year old girls, sixteen, fourteen, who were good you know which was all these girls coming through but you're dealing with parents and you know it was just a different, a whole different vibe when you're coaching girls. (John Hughes 24/7/12)

A lot of it was just the girls, you know. Having to ban mobile phones in the room, just the chatting it was more of a social thing for a lot of them you know, trying to get people's attention it was often very hard. (John Hughes 24/7/12)

John also found the different attitudes frustrating at times. John believes that the boys were more committed due to their willingness to watch and learn from professional league games on television. The girls were different. They were not as interested in spending their spare time watching football:

If you haven't watched really the top level I think it's very hard to raise it to that next level. So I found that frustrating just the lack of real commitment and seriousness about the game. Because I know you see twelve and thirteen year

old boys, that's what they live for, they're watching the game all the time. I think that's a big difference. (John Hughes 24/7/12)

While John is a coach of women's football, this comment may be viewed as sexist – because the girls are not adopting the traits exhibited by the boys they are seen as not being equal or not as good. It can be argued that the reason for the difference is that girls do not have the same access to the game as the boys, they often lack the necessary support and are not subject to the influence of suitable role models.

Being Treated Differently

Football is strongly considered as male dominated and many of these women faced obstacles to their ongoing involvement in a sport which society has deemed more suitable for men. The women continually met with resistance and were constantly treated differently from men.

The determination of males to preserve sport as a male activity and privilege has affected every stage of the development of sport for women (Welford and Kay 2007, p.151)

The right to referee

The lack of suitable referees for the women's game and the attitudes of those male referees who had a different opinion on whether women should play the game was not the only issue confronting the women interviewees. Those women who took up the challenge and trained to be referees themselves were often confronted by widespread discrimination:

And it took girls a long while to be accepted as refs, didn't it, especially when you went on a Saturday or Sunday morning and you had to do a local game, and you had to have, I was always used to ref in Lalor or Thomastown, and these guys said, you stupid woman, you go back in the kitchen, and I said ummm. Which they did quite often. (Elaine Watson 3/9/12)

I had a great time with the boys but then you used to cop abuse when you were at inter school things, some little kids, that's the only time I ever copped abuse. What's she doing reffing? I said well I'm here to do a game. I said any more abuse and I'll stop the game, so I did and they said, we're going to get into trouble aren't we. Well, the referees are always right and whether you like me, him or whoever. (Elaine Watson 3/9/12)

Due to the shortage of referees, Elaine volunteered to undertake a course in Mackay and was successful in passing the exam. However in an attempt to apply for a higher ranking and then moving to Brisbane, Elaine was required to sit the same exam a total of three times:

And I had the president come up to me saying Elaine, Elaine, you know you've passed the exam you're a referee! I said what did I get, and he said 99.5% and I just looked at him and he said what's the matter – where did I lose 0.5%?
(Laughing) (Elaine Watson 3/9/12)

Oh dear, oh dear, anyway, that led to women taking up the refereeing course, you know they started with the juniors but particularly the women they soon graduated to seniors because there weren't the numbers there to keep them isolated. They sort of spread their assistance, they might of played in one area and refereed in another, you know. So Queensland has, I'm told, the largest number of qualified female referees in Australia, and some of them are even FIFA qualified. (Elaine Watson 3/9/12)

Nowhere to change

A common prejudice against women playing football was the failure to provide suitable changing rooms:

We used to change in the park down at Richmond, East Richmond, which is the ground next to Richmond's ground. We used to have to change in the toilets and we had a school game. The boys changed in a room and the girls were told, oh come dressed, come ready for the game. (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

We used to have the stinky old men's changing rooms, we would go and clean them, but we never had our own change rooms for example. (Annette Hughes 24/7/12)

Media attention

Media attention or the lack of it has been the subject of much research in relation to women and sport (Hargreaves 1994; Scraton & Flintoff et al. 2002; Stell 1991; Williams 2003, 2007). Women in sport have long been discriminated against through the sexualisation of athletes, under-representation and the reporting of only the unusual or bizzare. While the lack of media attention was not a major theme of discussion among the women interviewed, most were aggrieved at the lack of attention the game receives in

relation to the men's game and agreed that the game needed increased promotion if it was to succeed and develop:

The lady newspaper writers of the day would have probably weekly or fortnightly columns, which involved a bit of women's soccer. We don't get a word nowadays, not a word. So they'll have to deal with it. (Elaine Watson 3/9/12)

(Deep breath) Publicity wise they get nothing when men get it all, but for soccer even the men don't get as much as the rugby league and the rugby union. (Elaine Watson 3/9/12)

I think the main area that I have a gripe about is the newspaper articles. And I say to myself just as many women read newspapers as men, just as many women are living lives in the community as men. Why don't they get better coverage for the women's sports and the minor men's sports? (Elaine Watson 3/9/12)

I think funding and recognition is important but you know football generally in terms of the recognition by the media there's this perception that football's not popular because we're not on TV and in every magazine and newspaper like AFL and maybe rugby league. (Heather Reid 31/7/13)

You know that's the biggest challenge, we need to get it out there to be promoted and people actually see it and go wow, these girls can play. And success is always a good thing. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

But then our best, most successful team is still struggling for that type of media action and that's our women's cricket team. They've been successful in many ways but they're still you know not you know um, advertised, got the press, the media does not get behind them, I don't know what their thing is, male dominated thing, that's the only thing I can put it down to. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

When I played internationals you didn't get any coverage. No one knew who you were from a brass razoo, you could walk back through with the World Cup and they wouldn't know who you were. What they get now is fantastic. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

Within the football world, as far as mainstream goes, most people don't have any idea. Publicity is not there, the press and the free to air telly do not cover much, or any of it at all. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

While there is a general call for increased media attention, Lisa recalls the infamous release of the Matildas nude calendar in 2000. The players agreed to appear nude to increase awareness of the plight of the women players and to raise much needed income to offset the costs of training and playing for their country. The calendar generated a lot of publicity – although not all of it was favourable. Lisa recalls the decision to release the calendar:

The naked calendar they did back in 2000 I think that propelled the team in the media. I don't know anyone that knew, heard or cared or whatever about it, but the calendar, the ploy of the calendar was that any marketing, that makes attention is doing its job. That was the intention of the CEO at that time – let's just put it out there to get us noticed. It did, it did that. (Lisa Casagrande 11/12/12)

Vicki believes that a more positive association with female role models in sport is important in promoting the game in the media – such as Ellyse Perry (a dual international in football and cricket):

Some of the media with the women you know if it's negative media you just think oh god we've gone back thirty years but you get these other ones like the girl Perry is it that plays Australian cricket – oh Perry – Perry. I mean more interviews with her I don't think she's promoted enough because gosh who, when's that going to happen again, you can play in two, and she's got this lovely personality that just comes out and you just hope that everyone gets that image and not the other negative stuff. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

Sexism in the board room

The under-representation of women in decision-making bodies that govern the sport is one of a number of issues that still confront women and girls within football (Welford 2011). The discrimination experienced by women involved in the administration of the game reinforces the dominance of the male hierarchies and marginalises those women who strive to achieve at this

level of authority. This treatment restricted the abilities of those women to assist in the development of the women's game.

You know I've had people in the early years who were a bit sceptical. Blokes who were sceptical about a woman being able to do this job. (Heather Reid 31/7/13)

I had a club president in the office not long after I started who was complaining about something and he said when I meet the new CEO I'm going to tell HIM you know this has to be done and that has to be done and my staff member said well actually you can tell HER because she's standing right behind you (laughter) and he quickly apologised and said I'm terribly sorry, I'm terribly sorry you know, so there's just that assumption and that's gone now. (Heather Reid 31/7/13)

There were a number of times I have been in boardroom meetings and cannot believe the absolute rubbish that passes over the table about what people can do and what people can't do. I always put myself in a position where I like to show people what a woman can do. If I am a role model as a woman then you tell me what I can't do and I will show you what I can. There are definitely people there that will so "no you can't do this" as a woman, or they put obstacles and barriers up. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

On the Administration side, certainly at Board level trying to get as much for the women as the men used to get, from a development and finance side of things. On the Board many years ago it was very hard to get money for anything to do with women's football. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

Only at the Board level, I found the biggest hurdles. Back then it was simply they had no choice, they had to put a female from women's football on the Board. We were given a little bit of lip service. I didn't believe that they took it seriously most of the Board at that time, didn't give a damn about it. It was very much pissing in the wind. I tended to deal with stuff directly because back then each member had a portfolio, and mine was women's football and we did a lot of interaction with staff and I basically worked with the staff as much as I could without having to worry about the Board. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

When you've got the top body always putting the males first, that follows all the way down the line. At FIFA level as well you got people like Sepp Blatter going on about the women wearing tight clothes to play football and you fight a lost cause with people like that at the head of these things. A long way to go at those levels, but in other countries it is really well represented and really well looked after. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

Maggie recalls an experience where the decisions at Board level favoured the men over the women:

Whereas the men used to have an annual trip to China and everything else. Partly paid by players and partly paid by the Federation. We took the women's elite squad to China and we had to pay for ourselves and others represented the Federation on the tour and I had to pay too. The Board gave us \$3000 for a physio to take with us. Where they had been going for the last 10 years, given \$20,000 every year to take a representative men's squad, as they don't actually play in a competition, they play in their own friendly league. They pick three players from each Premier League team and half the Board would go off to China for a couple of weeks for their trip, all expenses paid. So there was a big difference back then, that kind of thing was very much brought to a head and stopped in the end. Really just making a noise about it making it stop. That was very much old school Board. Nobody would ever consider that now. All those people have gone. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

What happened to our stuff?

The women interviewed were often treated differently when it came to the allocation of training and playing uniforms. This level of discrimination provided that while the men and boys received all that they required in terms of resources the women and girls were often left to their own devices. Many of the women interviewed spoke about how this was typical of the treatment they received and how it made them feel – unnoticed, not respected or acknowledged:

The women Victory squad didn't even get a training uniform last year because the men, the youth boys took it, it disappeared, we never saw it. The girls got a plain tracksuit and a few things and playing gear and we went trying to find the training

gear and it wasn't there and Adidas said we've sent it out and you're not getting any more so somewhere it's gone to the men. They had no training gear all season. And that's just typical of, and the girls just went oh well. If it had been the boys being prima donnas and they would have gone ooh, but the girls just went oh well. (Jane Natoli 24/7/12)

I mean my first tournament we didn't even have gear and here I am I'm five foot, I was given a man's basketball tracksuit for Australia, who's a six foot four bloke and I'm trying to wear this tracksuit that's a six foot four bloke! Look I'm five foot and it rolled right up and, so it's really great to have seen the changes in the game and recognition for the girls. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

How sad is this, I remember we got a little spray jacket and it had the coat of arms on it. It wasn't even sewn on, it was like a little badge and glued on with gold art line pen markers, Australia 1 (as there were two teams representing the Oceania) and it had Perry Park and just the dates on there, Oceania and it was just this gold, I will never forget it. It wasn't even embroidered nicely or anything like that. (Dalys Carmody 19/6/12)

So you look at what female athletes had to do historically to now. Look when I was coaching within the National Team, so I think I was involved with the under sixteen National Team, was when they finally got the sponsorship deal – is it now with Nike? I think it was originally with Adidas, it's now with Nike where the women were given the same gear as the men, where historically that hadn't happened. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

Not so much from the executive at the time. Like when we went away we got very little from the club, we'd have to buy our own shorts and like, the boys if they went away for rep you know they got the whole lot. We may have got one pair of shorts that was all. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

We actually made our own uniforms they were the school blouses and we took the collars off and we took the buttons off and we put the black bias binding around here and put the RR on the pocket. We paid 30 cents a week to play so that was to the refs so, yeah interesting. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

I found it hard to get some of the gear but we were lucky here because nearly all the time our coaches were actually male players so that mediation was always there so that was good. Always, and in some other clubs gosh, they struggled with that. They were completely separate in like their own little committee and everyone thought, yeah that was pretty sad. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

Life Choices

One of the major areas of concern among the women interviewed is the difficulty that work, career and family can place on young girls and women in their pursuit to participate and continue to play the game, particularly at the elite level. Most felt that they were disadvantaged by a lack of assistance and financial support that would enable them to continue to play without having to be concerned about where the money was coming from. Some of the women found that motherhood provided additional challenges, especially if no support was forthcoming from partners to enable them to train and play. It was felt that while the women were expected to face these challenges, the men were not always subjected to the same type of issues. In the end some of the women did not have a choice, while others had to make the hard decision between a family, a career or playing football:

She's got to make a choice around her, she starts to think about having children and cement her marriage and she's got to give her career up to do that, where a bloke can you know, biologically, just continue to play and still be a dad. So you know there's lots of things that you've got to weigh up as a female that impacts incredibly on your elite athlete status. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

Families and relationships

For some of the women, the commitment needed to succeed at the elite level placed additional pressures on relationships, particularly if children were involved:

I had my son and that's why I stopped playing and I went back for half a season and then I just realised that I didn't think I could spare the time. You know partner of a law firm and so time was precious and I just couldn't fit everything in, something had to give. (Annette Hughes 24/7/12)

When you get picked in the State Teams and then in the Australian Team there's camps and different things. In the indoor team I used to actually get on a bus Friday night, travel up to Sydney, train and stay with my teammates in Sydney on the weekend, come home on the bus Sunday night and then go to work. I did that fairly consistently for a while....it puts pressure on relationships so I think with you

know my marriage kind of got to a point where um the football won ahead of the marriage and we went our separate ways. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

Maybe some that played in teams, maybe had partners or husbands that didn't support them playing, especially if children came along and they weren't so helpful in allowing that person to get to training. We can't get them to look after the kids so they couldn't get to training. You have to have buy in from everyone. If it was the other way around, they would go to training and wouldn't worry about the kids. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

A need to work

A majority of the women interviewed believed that the need to work provided a major barrier to them in their pursuit to play football:

So probably for about five years I didn't play for State because I couldn't get the time off so I'm a late bloomer as well. So then when I left that job, got another job and went back into the State team and made the Australian team. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

Well, you couldn't really hold a full time job because of the intense training and then going down to the Institute of Sport. Whenever they called you up type thing to train before we went overseas. Basically I didn't work a full time job until later on in life and that was part of my decision to retire as well, will I go for the Olympics or will I go and get a full time job and get a mortgage, and I chose the full time job and the mortgage. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

If I had a nine to five job and then maybe I would go to a field and see if I could find a team to help out but my job doesn't let me do that. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

So it was a struggle to go to work and then try and train full time as well and succeed in that and then get time off work. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

Then I went into nursing and had to stop playing because I worked shifts, so I was working most weekends. First year nurses don't get weekends off (laughter). I had about seven years off when I was nursing and then I met my husband and we had two children and then we moved to the Blue Mountains and I started playing with

Penrith and that was sort of my first year back after seven years of not playing. I was pretty hopeless, I was the worst, because in your mind you still feel like you can play (laughter) and your body just doesn't cooperate. It wasn't real good.

(Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

Yes, I am still playing, it has taken me five years to get back into playing after my accident, but I have attempted to come back and play four times but you are paying \$300 and I have only played one or two games, so it works out very expensive games. Because once you have played one game you can't get your money back. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

Apart from my skills levels, that is probably the biggest barrier and just having to leave and go to work. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

It's hard to commit

Some of the women argue that it is difficult to get young women to commit to playing football when the demands placed on them to train and play, often at their own expense, compete with the need to earn a living or gain an education:

I can't see it in my lifetime, women earning good money out of playing football. Very few do it. It is hard to get girls to sacrifice, you got them going through NTC's at that age when they are doing VCE. I was fortunate when I played that the training commitment in those years when I was working wasn't as much as what it is now. You had your two nights training, maybe three, now it's five nights a week training, commitment, commitment, commitment. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

Debbie highlights the need for a good education. The opportunity to make a good living from playing women's football is limited particularly when you compare it with the amounts that some men are earning:

It's hard for the girls to commit to that. At the end of the day you have to get your education, because you got to get a job because as a female your job is going to pay your way, not earning 30,000 pound a week as an English footballer. We played against boys in our junior time, like Scott McDonald, who were very good

juniors, they make 30,000 pound a week. We are certainly not going to get into that category. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

Some of the girls will only play if they don't have to attend training, as the need for work or the pressures of study compete with their free time:

A lot the girls only play if they don't have to train. They say they are only playing for that team if they don't do training. They are all working and if there are any young girls at university, they've all got work. Most of the time we didn't do any training this year. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

Theresa believes that with all of the added challenges facing women in sport (children, relationships, work and education) that there is just not enough time for women to fight any harder for much needed funding:

The challenges I suppose with the way the sport is, are funding and that funding being directed into the right areas. I think women tend to be their own worst enemies. They cause themselves a lot of battles because they are not prepared to push that little bit harder. Sometimes I think because they don't have the time to push a little bit harder. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

Sexual Stereotyping

Research has shown how the strong cultural associations between sport and masculinity have linked female athleticism with the lesbian stereotype, associations that are particularly strong for women in traditionally male sports such as football (Welford and Kay 2007, p.161).

While the women interviewed were not directly asked to comment on the issue of sexuality in their football experience, sexual relations in football did arise during general discussions associated with family, community support and relationships. Research indicates that 'issues surrounding sexuality have an impact on women who play' (Caudwell 1999), something not apparent in the interviews with the women participants. Despite the women being generally unaffected by the stereotyping, the perception that women who played football must be gay did arise. Vicki shares her experiences:

There was just a small group that had a stigma attached to them as far as homosexuality and whatever. I didn't really care about that, but yes it came across to us that if you played you had to be butch but I liked the game so much I didn't care. But as I got older, when I got to about sixteen I sort of started to think oh I wonder if that's how they do see us, but as most of our team had boyfriends, our team didn't cop it as much. But it was definitely there, it was absolutely there and I think it did turn a few people off but they just thought it was a male sport. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

Only when I was twelve, eleven and a half – just starting, I just wanted to play so much. Then when I got to about sixteen when everyone was having boyfriends and then you said you played soccer and they say oh you must be butch or something. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

So I think people just thought well everyone must be rough that plays soccer but you have to have testosterone to want to play that game but meanwhile hockey and all that, it was thriving but no one ever asked the question there. It crossed your mind but I think at the Club here the majority of us had boyfriends and all that sort of stuff so it never was an issue. But you did hear on the sideline you know if someone was very, very good, yeah I bet they're gay or something, they've got

balls or something. But no I just wanted to play too much to worry about that, but it would have been there. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

But they never, there was a bit of um, you could tell who was with whom and there was probably a few love thingos but the coach we had, he just stopped all that, you are here for football that's it, or soccer then, that's all back there. When you get home worry about that later. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

Cox and Thompson (2001) argue that,

When women take on stereotyped masculine characteristics such as engaging in a traditionally male-dominated activity like playing sport, gendered boundaries have been crossed. The logic therefore follows that this activity, when played by women, challenges heterosexuality and therefore signifies lesbianism. (Cox and Thompson 2001, p.9)

As Vicki recounts:

We had one player in our team that was well known in the area as being gay and that was, you know when it wasn't really accepted. I thought the world of her but she had a rough reputation like um her being down town and someone gave me a bit of trouble that when we all went to the Coffee Pot or something on a Thursday night and she just grabbed him and threw him out on the street over a car one handed. You know just like that! So I always knew to have her on my side, but she was as soft as underneath and she just played this rough and tough person because that's what was expected of her. I felt sorry for her. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

Other women express their thoughts on sexuality in football. Helen acknowledges the presence of homosexuality in women's sport and at the same time says it had little impact on herself as a player:

I grew up with it so I never thought about it, to tell you the truth (laughter), until somebody about ten years ago pointed it out to me. Never really thought about it before. It has never been a barrier. I think there have been more gay women as you get into, and whether that is because I have played cricket and touch footy,

also at rep level, I think it is just women's sport in general. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

Louisa mentioned that although she was aware lesbianism was present in the game, sexuality had not been an issue for her:

The sexual orientation of other girls was not a barrier to me playing the game. The only reason I did not mention this as part of the recorded interview is that it was not an issue for me. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

While the sexual orientation of other girls was not a deterrent to Louisa, she acknowledges that there exists a perception that equates women and sport with homosexuality. Louisa recalls a personal experience which supports the view that some people have of girls who play football – that is if you do, you must be gay!

I have a male friend of mine who works for Rebel Sports who I had known for a long time. Unbeknown to me he had always assumed that I was gay, until one day I was talking to him about a boyfriend – and he was shocked! 'I always thought you were gay' he said. He was so shocked by this that he went home and told his family. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

He was so sure that I was gay just because I played football! (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

Lisa comments on her time in the USA and the changes in society's attitudes in relation to sexuality:

Over a period of time in 2000 in the US, being gay was not popular, not accepted. If they were gay they were hidden. Now it's a completely different ball game. Society has changed over the last 12 years...Sexuality seems not to be an issue as much any more. (Lisa Casagrande 11/12/12)

Being sexualised

Women playing in a male-dominated sport were often treated differently because of their gender. While these women faced obstacles of sexualisation they did what they needed to do just to play the game:

At one stage we were allowed to protect ourselves by crossing our arms over our chest, which must have made the handball ruling a bit tricky. I know we were allowed to do that, not that anybody worried about it, you carried on with the game and you forgot about it. When I was playing with Thistles, we used to trap the ball (with our chests) like everybody else, I didn't tell mum that. That was the only two things as a player. (Nell Perry 3/12/12)

They also had you know the blokes who just came out to see the girlies and a lot of chauvinism came into that which still gets up my nose. It still gets up my nose that the promotional material for the women's game today shows shots from underneath, like girl's bottoms and stuff. What is that about, you know, you wouldn't get a shot up Harry Kewell's shorts would you and think that's going to promote the game. (Annette Hughes 24/7/12)

Insurance I suppose was another area, we always, the first few games we used to have to line up and the ref would have to go and run his finger down everyone's back to see that we all wore bras and all that sort of stuff. I don't think men ever got checked whether they wore undies but we had to wear bras (laughter) (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

Every game, every game we would line up and toss the coin and then they'd go down your back (laughter), yeah, so interesting. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

I think it was probably it was in everyone's mind well if that's what we have to do to play, that's what we have to do. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

But the pregnancy issue was a big thing. If you knew you were pregnant and playing the Association couldn't put that in a clause because that was discrimination. We put we advise strongly that you don't play and then the opposing teams, if they found out that someone was pregnant they didn't want to play them. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

Politics, Culture and Power – Superficiality of Support

The politics of sport do not always work in the best interests of those involved in trying to improve the environment for women in sport. Belinda's involvement with the AFC had a lasting impact on her experiences in women's football and highlighted that cultural and patriarchal levels of discrimination were still active in football. Belinda gained an insight into how women's football is treated in the AFC and realised that there is in fact a 'superficiality of support' and a general lack of respect:

I hadn't been exposed to some of the politics or the workings of the upper echelon of power of football or any sport. So to walk in with this very passionate, want to do the right thing for the lowest level then come to realise they don't care about all that, was very confronting. (Belinda Wilson 12/2/13)

The fact also that the women's game in particular wasn't very well supported, although they'd turn around and say yes we have this, and yes we have that, but really there was no support. There was never a time we as a department would go forward with an idea to help the development or to help to better the competitions, we were always knocked back and the biggest thing that um was the reason was budgets. And then you hear they're spending millions and millions of dollars on the men's Asian cup and then we have a budget of \$750,000 and that lack of respect. Same level of competition, but you know what we really don't care, there's some money to help you get along, do what you can with it but all the focus is on the men's game. That is cultural as well because at the time, at the time it was a Qatari who was involved in running the game. (Belinda Wilson 12/2/13)

Mohammed bin Hammam, or El President. He came across that he was very supportive in women's football, by creating a women's department, by creating competitions, by creating some pathways, but it was very superficial. There were no layers underneath that, and then everything was steered towards what can we do for the men's and how can we do it better, but every time we had an issue there was no support. And then as I took control of the department the support got less and less because obviously I moved up the rank but then no one was filling in my spot. He specifically wanted a female only department, so even if I had, and I did, any male colleagues who were in the women's game were very passionate

about women's game and could do a good job, a lot better than I could because of their experience, I wasn't allowed to employ them so then you had a gender bias. They don't care; it doesn't register because they don't have those rules in their country. So the fact that for twelve months I was the director of women's football and I had no one for women's football development. I had no one for coach education. I had one person for competitions and I had a secretary and that was it because we'd also lost during that year the person who was involved with referees. So as a director I had to cover three positions plus the director role and also monitor and make sure the competition was running. (Belinda Wilson 12/2/13)

Politics in sport can have lasting impacts on personal relationships.

There's always politics in sport, and really I found I ended up in a personal relationship with someone who was working in women's football as well and that caused a lot of distress for lots of different reasons. He was a high profile coach and I was a player and we did a lot of development work together and, where we felt we were very professional that caused a lot of angst and a lot of politics in the soccer community. That made it really difficult and in the end it really affected our relationship and we probably went our separate ways because of the politics and I was completely fed up with all the bureaucratic stuff and I walked away from the game without a backward glance for at least ten years. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

So it really had an impact on my life in lots of different ways and it took a long time to repair that. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

While the women interviewed were subject to decades of discrimination in all aspects of the game, many of them acknowledge that times are changing and that today those who wish to participate can do so with much more freedom and acceptance. Women are still under-represented in the board room and in coaching positions, however there are signs of improvement. Most of the women simply aspire to being treated fairly:

We wanted to be treated exactly the same as the men and not just be put down, equal rights yeah. (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

And as I said it's a big improvement but there's still a long way to go, we need more women in refereeing, we need more women in coaching and we need more women like me in leadership, it's lonely at times Greg (laughter). It doesn't make sense. (Heather Reid 31/7/13)

CHAPTER EIGHT

Meanings of Participation

Research undertaken by Scraton et al. (1999) suggests that football has different meanings for different women. The study concludes that while men do have a considerable influence, women will impose their own values and practices on the game and incorporate their own meanings into their activities.

The findings expressed in this research are corroborated by the experiences of the women interviewed. While enjoying a love and passion for the game, the physicality and competitiveness of the contest, the interviewees are at the same time incorporating 'values that are more closely associated with being female, such as connectedness, sharing and supporting each other'. (Scraton et al. 1999, p.107). This set of values is communicated in the memories and experiences of the women as they look back at their journey and recall those moments which help to define their presence in the game.

Looking back

The women pioneers of the game in Australia share some of their thoughts on what the game has meant to them. Most can only now, after their careers have ended, reflect on the highs and lows of their time in football. Betty was awarded life membership of AWSA in 1989, as well as the Australian Sports Medal and was inducted into the Australian Football Hall of Fame in 2000. Betty reflects on her time in the game and on how she was never one to bestow on it any great significance until she was acknowledged with life membership:

As I said I didn't put a lot of importance in what I was doing until my life membership (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

Her husband Mick, who has played a major role in the development of the women's game in Victoria, was present at the awards and remembers it fondly:

that night there honest I was so proud of her, I really was, you know and normally I'd laugh at things but we were all betting as to when she'd break down and cry because she's a very tearful person. There's all the clubs, there's the men's teams, it's the gold medal night, all the men's teams and all the women's teams and lots and lots of people there, 300–400 people I don't know. Anyway, to try and keep that lot quiet, it's an MC's nightmare basically to try and keep control.

. . . it came her turn to get up on stage right, she got up on stage and she walks to it and she's, she's like this, and she starts talking, and I thought she's going to go, she's going to cry, she's going to cry and I'm going to have dash out and give her a big handkerchief and wipe her tears, but she just stopped and she just leant on the rostrum and then she gave it to them. She just reeled, and there was, you could hear a pin drop, everybody listened to every word she said, you could hear a pin drop and she's, she actually spoke sense, she did, she said good stuff she really did and they applauded her because it really was. If you've known Betty for long and all those kids, most of the girls that were there have known Betty since they were knee high to a grass hopper. They stood up and applauded. It was great, it was fantastic.

. . . she spoke about where women's soccer has come from basically from where it's come from to where it is now and how proud she was to have been part of it and so on and so forth. It was yeah, she really really did well, it came from her heart, everybody knew that, there was no reading from anything, she was, she got her self comfortable and away she went. (Mick Hoar 25/7/12)

I've just thoroughly enjoyed it and I'm just really proud to have my two awards. I really am. (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

So you should be, yeah. (Mick Hoar 25/7/12)

At a time when women in coaching positions were rare and the barriers to women entering such a masculine space widespread, the aspirations of children can inspire a mother to transverse this divide. Betty recalls a story from when she began coaching about a boy in her son's football team, which was in need of a coach:

He had a shirt on and it fitted him up to here at the start of the game and then we had rain, and rain, and rain. By the end of the day the shirt was down to his ankles and he said did we win Mrs Betty? No we only let twelve in but don't worry (laughter). And to this day I can still remember that day. I coached them for a year and then actually my son Gavin took over. That was my involvement in coaching in getting them started, and that's well Gavin's 38 so it's 32 years ago. (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

Elaine, regarded as one of the major influences in the development and history of the women's game in Australia, reflects on her time in the game. Elaine equates her journey to an extra life lived and comments on the importance of sport in achieving a balanced life:

Well it's been an extra life really. Of course you've got your own family at home and they're going through school and they've got their club and representative involvement, our eldest boy was under fifteen rep for the soccer. But then they grow up and they start living their own lives. They marry and leave home and so your involvement with a sporting activity is something like that helps to fill the gaps, and you look at any club and they've got a range of administrators from the grey hairs down to the just out of high school people because it sort of flows through when people have the time and the interest they devote it to something that gives them that satisfaction. If they go to work and they've got a boss that hounds them and then they go to soccer and they coach the boys' team, it's a different story, it's a relaxation and a reward for them so I think sport has got a big part to play in any rounded life. (Elaine Watson 3/9/12)

Nicky, a former Matilda and qualified coach, agrees that you do not notice the longevity of participation or the achievements while you are involved in the game. At that point in your career you are too busy achieving milestones. The personal acknowledgement of your achievements only comes after you retire or leave the game:

You don't take notice of those things while you're playing, cause you just, you set goals you want, you know, you never think you're going to get picked in the State team and you do and then you go I never thought we'd win a State tournament and we did and then you go and oh my god I scored the winning goal in that game

and no one can ever take that off you. And while it is significant and great fun at the time it's only when you retire and you look back and go oh my resume's not too bad you know, that's ok....so I think personal satisfaction, and I've also met some incredible people, obviously my current partner, my husband, and you know. I've been to countries and done things that you never thought possible, so it's one of those things like I did a volunteer project around soccer in New Guinea as part of the peace process so you know without soccer I wouldn't have had any of those experiences, so it's terrific really. (Nicky Leitch 23/7/12)

Sharon, a member of the Australian squad which attempted to qualify for the first Women's World Cup in 1991, only understood how good a player she was after she left the game. Sharon believes that the game has played a major part in her life and remembers the sacrifices she had to make to achieve:

Very important, I think as I've got older I've only realised how. You don't realise when you're doing it, how good you are, you know what I mean, in the sense until you retire or you're out of the game for a while and other people come up to you and say, jeez you're a good player. I love watching you play and all this type of stuff. You don't realise that, I did it because I loved my sport plus I loved training and I wanted to make my mum and dad proud of me, you know, that was my drive besides the love of the game. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

I just believe that it shows you a lot in life and I don't know, it doesn't matter what code you represent in the way of sport, but it's, you know, I will always be proud that I've played for Australia and whether it's soccer or ping pong. You get the sense that I think Packer quoted once and that's not James, but his dad, quoted I'd give away all my fortunes to wear a baggy green and that's true, money can't buy you an Australian jersey, you have to earn it. It doesn't matter in what code you are, you still do the hard yards to get there, you know and you sacrifice things like work or friendships or relationships sometimes. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

Belinda, presently coaching a women's semi-professional team in the W-League, reflects on the relationship she can see between her involvement in

football and the issues that confront her in day to day life. Her involvement in the game presents many challenges:

The game, it challenges me in so many different ways now that without it my life would be rather boring. Although I'd probably open myself up to other areas and be challenged in that, but at the moment I get so much out of a problem and solving that problem. But then I can also relate it back to life in itself and that's where I think it's why I have so much passion about it because I can see the relationship. If I can't do it through one door then I can try and open another door and that's kind of how it is in terms of life so I can relate the two together. I think that's where I enjoy it. I get to see, you get to see the game in itself in a different point of view and you're always open to different points of view to how to see the game or perceive the game and then to perceive life in a similar way. And obviously my experiences overseas and looking to Australia from afar it was very interesting because we're very narrow minded, not all of us, but a lot of us, and we're very egotistical. So to see that and then go wow, am I like that? I hope I'm not, and then kind of changed the way I see things and perceive things and conversations that you have and just remember to be a little bit more open minded. And ok you see that from that angle, and some points I agree with, also have a look at this opinion. So yeah I think the two kind of work together at the moment for me, and I think it's just ingrained because I've been there for so long. (Belinda Wilson 12/2/13)

Heather, CEO of Capital Football in Canberra and a prominent figure in the development of the women's game in Australia, not only reflects on the past but looks to the future, Australia's role in Asia and the value of diversity, family and inclusion:

Sometimes I wonder why I've done it, why I've been involved so long but you know I guess I love the game, as I said before I love football and I love the diversity and I love the opportunities that are there for a whole range of people and I love the way football brings social inclusion, it brings people from different backgrounds together, you know and I'm really excited about the prospects for the Asian Cup in 2015. I'm on the local organising committee for that, Mr Lowy's committee for that and the potential that the game has throughout the Asian region is massive and I think the challenge for us is how we engage more with you

know our friends from the Asian communities. I've got great relationships with the Korean Soccer Association for example and the Chinese Association but the engaging with those groups more than the traditional you know groups from Europe or England. I think that's a big challenge and that's something that I'm sort of looking forward to in terms of what the Asian Cup can do for football, taking it to another level in Australia.

But I have to say that my time in growing up in the Snowy Mountains was when I first saw soccer played you know when it was men from the barracks, you know went down onto the local oval and they were playing soccer and I kicked the ball around with some friends when I was about fifteen or sixteen or something but that was also when I first understood the cultural differences because the Croatians were on one team and the Serbians were on another (laughter). So it's throughout my career there's been this interwoven sort of multi cultural aspect as well as diversity and family and inclusion and all that sort of stuff as well. That's what I value about the sport.(Heather Reid 31/7/13)

Lisa, a former Matilda, reflects on her time as a high profile player and how most don't appreciate the benefits and experiences they enjoy until after they have finished in their sport:

You know you see the world and understand different cultures, to understand what it's like to be a person in the limelight, an experience that the average person doesn't get, you're put in a unique situation. I think most athletes don't appreciate it until after they've finished their sport, but yeah, it makes you who you are, what you know and yeah, it's interesting. (Lisa Casagrande 11/12/12)

Not all memories are good memories – Betty recalls a moment that has stayed with her:

It's been a passion of mine well I suppose since I was born and of course my biggest upset of my life was what happened on my birthday when I was sixteen. It happened on my birthday in 1958. [Manchester United airline disaster] Oh, oh, I cried for days. (Betty Hoar 25/7/12)

At work

Many of the women reflected on the influences that playing football had on their later working lives. Debbie reflects on how the game has made her more receptive as she grows older and how football has impacted on her work life:

It has enriched me in my job as well. You are dealing with same situations in football and you get the same type of scenarios in the work place. The job is fairly stressful now days so it is nice to have an outlet. I find during the off-season I will work longer, because I haven't got to go to training. So things like having to go to training. Sometimes even like now I think "oh god, I have to go to training tonight, how am I going to fit that in", but it makes you have that definite break and gives you that...I enjoy giving back something to the game, because I have got a lot out of it. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

I think it has made me more tolerant to a certain degree, I'm getting older and less tolerant. It shows in my work place, if you don't work hard and you are not determined, whatever I do, I don't do it by half, I am full on. Someone made a comment in one thing we were doing at work [a conference], you had to say one thing they didn't know about you and there were two or three managers at the conference, when it got to me I said I had played for the Matildas and he went, "that explains a lot"! If I do it, I do it full on, I don't do it by half, even if I was dealing with a customer, I would do everything I could do to make that experience for the customer in my job the best experience. I never do anything by half. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

Sharon comments on her experiences of working in the Star Casino and how difficult it is for a woman to break into male-dominated lines of work. She is 'the only female that has ever made it to the position of acting duty manager'. Football has helped her to gain the necessary skills to succeed at her work:

My job at the moment is running a small team at the Star. I mean I'm an acting duty manager. If I didn't have the team environment or actually being, because I played defender, actually being able to organise people to get back on the, you know, once they make a break and all that type of stuff, that's helped me in my career. I'm the only female that's ever made it as far as an acting duty manager and I just missed out on the manager's position there and that's because of my

team involvement in soccer. I'm putting it down to that. The other two go to an incident like a fight or having to lock people down or remove people, be able to look at the whole picture and instruct grown men to do this, do this, do this, do this, and they just take commands off me because I'm a leader, you know. It's shown me how to lead in my life. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

Oh jeez yeah (laughter). Yeah, I mean it's great. I fell into the job after I retired and that's what it is, you know and just built my way up from just being an officer to what I am now and I won't stop until I become a manager and I do lead a small team the way I do. Yeah, good, it's alright, took a long time to get in my world, it took a long time to get where I am 'cause it's male dominated like soccer is basically. It's a big struggle but you know I think soccer helped me in the way that you know this is the way you have to be to get ahead. (Sharon Young 14/8/13)

Louisa is fortunate to have secured employment in the sport that she loves, where she can benefit both herself and the game::

I've been fortunate at a playing level and lucky enough that my career has lead me into gaining employment within a sporting organisation. I was quite lucky. I am happy in my job and pretty laid back, so I don't look too far in the future. I just think about now and what I can do now and how I can help the game grow and how I can help myself grow now as a person rather than in twenty years time. To think too far in the future, to me that is wasted energy. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

The importance of teamwork

How to contribute as part of a team was important in the discussions with the women interviewed. Developing teamwork skills enabled them to develop the necessary life skills that would enrich their individual, work and family lives:

It's important to know how to be a team player, not just in sport but in other areas of your life as well. Because if you are involved in something, it doesn't matter whether it is in the work place or anything. You cannot just always run your own race, you have to communicate. Communication is very important. Not just in sport but in most areas of life. I think that kids that don't play sport, especially team sport, they just don't get it. It is just all about them. Some of them are in for a terrible shock. (Nell Perry 3/12/12)

Due to football being a team sport it is how you adapt to the variety of individuals you meet with different personalities. Like all sports it teaches you how to how to respect individuals from different cultural backgrounds, ages and experience of football knowledge. Football teaches you resilience, teamwork, how to be fit and healthy; problem solve independently and as a group and; be confident and remain confident when it is not going your way on and off the field. All that you learn whilst playing a team sport can and is brought into the working and family environment. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

It is not so much playing the game but experience of learning and gaining knowledge about the world, travelling to other countries close by and developing social skills and interpersonal skills that helped me learn to communicate with people from all different races, social backgrounds and personalities. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

It was great to meet foreigners and bring a bit of Australia internationally as a senior player. The experience of how I could help guide other people in a positive manner and how young players can teach you a lot about yourself as a person, your faults, your strengths and your weaknesses. (Louisa Bisby 19/7/12)

John in his role as a coach of a women's team acknowledges the differences between men and women's football team environments. While the women are involved in playing a game dominated by masculine influences, the women have created a sporting environment where they can enjoy the game as a team:

Most of the teams that I coached it was more important for the players that they like the people they played with and got on pretty well and there was a good team ethic and team environment. Whereas I've played with guys that I've really hated on the field, you know guys that didn't care for each other at all, but on the field they were fine. Which I don't think would work with the women's team. (John Hughes 24/7/12)

Being a role model

Annette reflects on her time in the game and how she was often looked upon as a role model for the younger players. It made it easier for her to recognise her worth in the game in spite of all the barriers and obstacles she faced as a woman playing football:

I was the oldest woman there and I was a professional so the fourteen year olds would find out how old I was and they'd often go, oooohh, my mum's that age and stuff like that (laughter). I actually had parents come up to me and thank me because I'm a lawyer, I'm a professional woman and I play sport and I can be a kind of a role model to the kids and that made me feel like it was worth putting up with all of that crap to try and help those girls come along. (Annette Hughes 24/7/12)

Walking away

Some of the women did not always enjoy their participation in the game and have experienced times when they had to walk away. Lisa shares her experience of being a full-time professional player. She recalls the pressures placed upon her time by her relationship with coaches and the culture within the team which pushed her into leaving the game:

You're pretty much a full time player, especially when you're down at the Australian Institute of Sport. Training at six, session at ten o'clock, session at three o'clock. It was very tight; you know you don't have the weekend off. Its pretty well a 24 / 7 full time program. (Lisa Casagrande 11/12/12)

Yeah, I came back to Australia and I played for the National team at a tournament and I was just about to walk out. I was just, there was just such a cultural difference to what Portland was. I was just not happy with that, it wasn't worth it you know. You're in your own time having a break from training and you have to ask permission to walk 100 metres down to a shop to get something. It's like you know, we're mature adults here you're not in kindergarten and that's the way it was at that time, it's sort of like how it was and I just didn't agree with it. (Lisa Casagrande 11/12/12)

As I mentioned earlier I guess I don't regret not having the experiences. I guess that probably maybe that's why I haven't done too much since the end of my career, as I haven't really wanted to be involved, gone through enough during that period. So but certainly there are no regrets. I mean the experiences you learn and have during that period and the opportunity to play in large stadiums and travel the world and things like that are certainly I don't regret, but I haven't been involved really since I finished playing. Probably, yeah a little bit reluctant to because of some of the experiences that I've had more with coaches, not necessarily administrators. (Lisa Casagrande 11/12/12)

Vicki recalls her experience with state representation and her involvement with the national team when it visited the far north coast of NSW. Although Vicki was purportedly identified as a potential Matilda, her experiences in the State team and at an Australian camp convinced her otherwise.

That was in 1977 so a German fellow from Western Australia, he happened to say to me you know, stick it out because I think by the time 1983 comes around you'll be in the Australian side. I thought that was a joke, but my ambitions weren't there. I just wanted to play and make sure women and girls played so yeah it was interesting times. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

In 1978 a few of us went to an Australian camp down at St Gregory's. That was interesting. We had a possible versus a probable Australian side so that was quite overwhelming that was. I took myself off because I just couldn't, it was at Marconi, and just the crowds, and I thought my gosh, what is this? I asked to come off. I didn't handle it very well at all. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

When the Matildas visited the far north coast of NSW to play a series of games against a touring French team Vicki's involvement with the national squad and the culture surrounding it convinced her that she had made the right decision:

Just to hang around the Australian side down at Ballina and I was really pleased I never went any further. I don't think I would have liked it. I just didn't like the atmosphere around it and like I was there when they were eating and they had to watch absolutely everything they ate and they were all virtually in the sin bin

because someone ate half a Mars bar on the bus and they were determined to find out who it was so they were all in so much trouble because someone ate this Mars bar and it was all false. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

Theresa suffered a breakdown as a result of working hard to ensure that all of what the women had earned the hard way was recognised and that the history of the women's game was not forgotten. After working for years to develop and improve the women's game, the added responsibility of family and an unfortunate assault on her husband, Theresa decided to walk away from the game. 'I needed to take care of myself before anything else':

I just wanted to make sure that what we had worked hard to achieve, that the history was recognised and that the work we achieved was recognised and that they built on that from then on. I was so passionate about that happening that I ended up having a break down and my husband told me, I don't quite understand how it all worked myself, because I didn't see that there was anything wrong but he told me that this is what was happening. By this time I had two young children, three and a couple of months and in the whole process my husband was stabbed in an armed hold up!! I am always quite positive in my approach to things, I didn't think there was anything wrong. I thought I was taking care of everything, him included and yes I was, but I had wrung myself into the ground. With a lot of discussion with him, he and I decided that it was time for me to leave soccer for a while and let it get on with itself because I needed to take care of myself before anything else. That was early 2000. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

Putting something back

Some of the women believe that it is important to put something back into the game. Both Debbie and Helen achieve this through coaching:

I think a lot of players who were very very good and did a lot for women's football have just walked away and not put anything back in. I don't really like the admin side of it instead I put something back into the game through coaching and that is where I get my enjoyment. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

I have tried to make it more professional in my time as a coach, just to make sure the women are treated equally wherever they were.

I would have been happy in 5th division. Just to be able to do it more than one day a week so you can utilise whatever knowledge you got on the players. To be able to teach them. (Helen Thomas 20/8/12)

Commitment

Nothing is achieved without commitment. Football taught the women that hard work, dedication and commitment are the keys to success. There is both a passion and a fear that those pioneers whose time, effort and dedication paved the way for those who were to follow in women's football will be forgotten:

Yeah, the good and the bad, the ups and the downs, life's not fair and how much effort you put into something is what you get back out of it. There are no short cuts in anything in football. You need to put the effort into training. I was fully committed through the best team years. When some people want to go and do other things I was boring as bat shit. I wouldn't go out and drink and get stupid during those years I was playing a lot of representative football. I didn't go skiing and silly things like that, I was totally dedicated to football. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

You don't do it for the money. For female players to make that commitment to do all that training on the possibility they might go on, where I think lads have got a different scenario that they could be half as good a footballer as some of the females, that they can earn money out of the game. (Debbie Nichols 20/7/12)

Once you set your mind on something, if you really want it bad enough you can achieve those goals. When I repped, one of the things that helped me out, because we had a fitness program that we were given, that our coaches and managers wanted us to adhere to and I was staunch with that. I probably trained extra and that paid off for me because I got in the A team. (Dalys Carmody 19/6/12)

Theresa recalls her time with Women's Soccer Victoria (WSV) and the amalgamation process that combined the women and the men's game under the banner of what is now the FFV. Theresa is concerned that the efforts of

the women involved in the development of the game and in particular the WSV will be lost:

We were women, we have done this, you haven't, and now you are going to take all the glory and all the funding for this wonderful thing from all of us as a women's body has done and make it your own. Even today I get very angry when people don't recognise the struggle and the heartbreak that went into forming and producing and growing that association. That we all put so much time and effort, and they just write it off as if football now started in the year 2000. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

Lets not forget that prior to that most of the women's national players who were Victorian based, paid for everything themselves. It was through sheer dedication to the sport that they became who they are and that the reason you play sport in the first place, is not purely for financial gain. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

Commitment to football was all encompassing for Vicki and her family. At times it might have had a higher priority than the children. Here the support of Vicki's husband enables her to continue in the game even though she is the mother of four children:

Yeah, everything, yeah, sometimes Brian and I used to think that we put soccer ahead of the kids. A lady saw us yesterday and she said she just always remembers when Brian was coaching and I was playing and the four little kids would be on a rug and she said she never knew how come they were so well behaved but found out later that Brian had bribed them with lollies. (Vicki Bugden 5/3/13)

The fight goes on

While much has been achieved in recent years in the acceptance and acknowledgement of women in football, there is still some way to go to reach a real equity in the game. Maggie acknowledges that there is still some way to go and appreciates the relationships she has formed in the game that keep her informed and involved:

I am still always fighting for the female cause so to speak. There is always more work to be done. I question people all the time about, if there is anything that is a problem or an issue that needs to be addressed and I will address it through the committee, the women's committee if it needs to go the Board. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

Lots of people I have met over the years, I have found some of them have stayed in touch. I can go to any game and find somebody I know somewhere. So that has always been to me the most important part. Now I have retired from it, I know lots of people and I can go and see people all the time and have a chat and find out what is what. I am still always fighting for the female cause so to speak. There is always more work to be done. (Maggie Koumi 23/7/12)

Theresa sums up the meaning of football in her life by encouraging others to become involved in sport and acknowledge all who have been involved with the game:

I have had a great life with it and I would encourage anybody to participate in sport at any level and hope that as a nation we give everybody the acknowledgement for their participation and the support they deserve and that all the people are acknowledged not just a few. (Theresa Deas 23/7/12)

CHAPTER NINE

Conclusion

In this final chapter of the thesis I discuss the outcomes of the research and how it has addressed the aims of the project. The first and major aim of the project was to 'examine the history of women's football in Australia through the use of an oral history methodology'. My involvement in women's football introduced me to the inequities of the game and how they marginalised and discriminated against women and girls. As a father of a daughter playing both local and representative football and a masters student in sport management, I became aware of the paucity of interest in women's sport in general and in women's football in particular. At that point in 2011 the women's game was not adequately written into the history of sport in Australia. The literature review in the early section of this thesis indicates that the amount of research undertaken in relation to women's football and women's sport in general in Australia is limited. While the review acknowledges the contribution of Watson (1994 and 1997), Williams (2007) and Hay and Murray (2006 and 2014) in relation to women's football history, it supports the position argued by Stell (1991), Cashman and Weaver (1991) and Vertinsky (1994) that the vast majority of publications in relation to the history of sport in Australia are about men. In acknowledging this lack of research attention, the review recognises those noted historians who call for much greater attention to be directed into research of women and sport in Australia (Vamplew 1994, Cashman 1995, Adair and Vamplew 1997, Hay and Murray 2014).

My thesis contributes to knowledge in relation to women's sport history and provides a history of the women's game in Australia. In doing so it answers, in part, the call from historians to address the lack of research attention paid to the study of women and sport in Australia. As an individual case study of the history of women's football in Australia, the research adds to the international 'fund of social and historical knowledge about women's football' (Magee, Caudwell, Liston and Scraton 2007). While the history follows some of the more traditional aspects, including the use of published accounts and

documentary evidence, it is based on the oral testimony of the women (and men) who were involved in the development of the game.

The thesis provided an opportunity for those women (and men) who played and play the game to be heard and to have their experiences documented in this history of the code in Australia. In providing this opportunity, the research supports international studies that acknowledge the importance of women's experiences in the pursuit to understand more about women's relationship with football (Caudwell 2002, Magee, Caudwell, Liston and Scraton 2007, Cox 2010). Women in sport in Australia have been largely ignored, deemed unimportant, or seen as ordinary in the eyes of historians (Vamplew 1994, Vertinsky 1994, Hay 2006, Macbeth 2007). By placing the experiences of the interviewees into the chronology of the history of women in football, the research provides a culturally significant contribution to the understanding of gender and football history in Australia. The thesis adds to the long list of international research undertaken in relation to the analysis of the women's game from the late nineteenth century through to the contemporary period (see chapter two, p. 27). The research discusses the gendered nature of the many obstacles, which have hindered the development of the women's game throughout its history.

The thesis adds to the limited use of qualitative research approaches in the study of sport in Australia, and in particular oral history interviewing as my choice of methodology. The research complements the work undertaken by Australian sport researchers, Maynard (2011), Wedgwood (2005), Muyt (2006) and that undertaken by Nikki Henningham in the Australian Women's Archive project. All have used qualitative methodologies in the study of their respective sports. The thesis supports the arguments of sport historians that the use of oral history in the study of women and football can be an excellent method for research (Randall 1991, Cahn 1994, Newsham 1994, Williams 2007) 'as it gains an insight into not just what these pioneering women footballers did but also what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, what they now think they did '(Wedgwood 2005).

Emerging themes from the research both support and challenge documented theories concerning the role of women participating in a male dominated sport. Although supporting the well-documented theories (see for example Stell 1991, Hargreaves 1994, Caudwell 1999, 2002, 2012), which highlight the battle for recognition, resources and support, the research also provides a degree of separation from some of the more accepted narratives of women involved in a sport dominated by men. While clearly aware of the discrimination inherent in male-dominated organisations, many women had only fond memories of the men who had influenced them, or had played major roles in their participation in the game. The rise of the 'supportive male' as a departure from the normally held bias of masculine trivialisation is paramount in the contributions of fathers, brothers, boyfriends, husbands and coaches. This aspect of the research challenges any notion of universal oppression from men against women participating in sport. 'Not all men tried to prevent women playing football and not all women supported women playing football' (Cox 2010,p.231).

The women display a great love of the game and tell stories other than those of exclusion and marginalisation, but rather of growth and success in the face of major challenges. While the women faced significant hardships in their efforts to play the game, a genuine love and passion for the game emerged as the overriding value expressed by the women involved. The majority of the women commented on the joy of playing the game and clearly stated that 'you don't do it for the money'. The research also challenges theories concerning the complex relationships between women's identities as female footballers and notions of femininity and sexuality (Scruton et al. 1999, Hargreaves 1994). Research suggests that women who are involved in a male-dominated sport will 'take on' masculine values such as aggression, competitiveness and a 'win at all costs' attitude, which 'demonstrates a shift in what is deemed to be acceptable female behaviour' (Scruton et al. 1999, p.107). And that due to the large-scale male influence that the game itself will take on masculine values rather than develop its own. I suggest that while the women enjoy playing the game hard and competitively that they also incorporate their own

meanings into playing the game. The women were more concerned about being part of a team, making life-long friends and just having fun.

The thesis reveals the value of family and community as major cornerstones of support for the women and their continued efforts to play the game. The emergence of British heritage as a common denominator among women who were key to the beginnings of the modern game in Australia, particularly in the state of Victoria, adds to the research undertaken in relation to the impact of immigration on male association football in Australia (Mosley 1997, Rosso 2007, Hay and Murray 2014). Football provided the families of the women involved with support, an avenue for social interaction, and a feeling of belonging.

The research examines the growth of the game over time and how changes in society have enabled the women to see a future for those who are new to the game as much as for those who are currently representing their country or regional W-League team. While the game is looking towards a much brighter future, the research also reveals a contemporary residual level of gendered and traditional discrimination associated with the early years of women's football. The movement of women into leadership and decision making roles such as coaching and administration is proving to be a significant challenge to the male dominance of this aspect of the sport. This analysis draws on the approach of sports feminism (Caudwell 2012).

The women and men who participated in this research were enthusiastic about having an opportunity to be included in a written history of the game in Australia. They were at first surprised that someone had finally taken an interest in them and their contribution to a game that they all loved. It provided an opportunity for them to recall their achievements and successes and highlighted the importance to them of recognising the pioneers of the game. Not just those who rose to the higher positions of national representation or Board directorship but those who worked tirelessly in canteens, washed strips, transported players, refereed, ran the line, and/or generally supported the game at the grassroots level.

This research has identified other topics that would benefit from further research. While a number of the women interviewed were of British heritage there remains a significant contribution to the women's game from other ethnicities. Little or no research has been undertaken in relation to the impact of immigration on the women's game in Australia in comparison with the history of the men's game. My thesis highlights the gap in knowledge in relation to the wider history of the women's game and highlights other areas which would benefit from further research..

The history of the many clubs, regions, communities, states and groups which all form part of the larger picture of women's football in this country. The role of Australian women in the FIFA Women's World Cup and Olympic games.. Australia's involvement in the many international competitions including the Oceania, Algarve and Cyprus cups. The efforts of women in attempting to enter leadership and decision making roles in football such as coaching and refereeing, both of which are still predominately occupied by men and continue to patronise and discriminate against women. What impact does this ongoing level of discrimination have on the development of, and women's ongoing involvement in the game?

The social impacts of discrimination on the women who have played and continue to play the game, and the fight for equality in all aspects of the game. Anonymous research about some of the more sensitive topics in women's football including sexuality, and further research into the role of indigenous women in the development of women's football in Australia.

My immediate postdoctoral project is to publish my research. Once complete I would like to continue to research the history of the women's game in Australia to make it a complete national study, and explore the topic of immigration and its impact on the women's game in Australia. In the future, to research areas in sport history where women have been excluded and provide an opportunity for them to be recognised.

This research makes a contribution to knowledge in the field of women in Australian sport history and provides a foundation for ongoing research. The research also provides a much-needed emphasis on women's football and the role it has played in the history of the code in Australia, which has been traditionally neglected, in academic research in Australia. It provides a link between those who pioneered the game and those women and girls who enjoy the love of the game today.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Interview Guide

Involvement in women's football

- What is your name and address?
- When and where were you born?
- Family make up?
- How did you get involved in women's football? What was your involvement?
 - a) In playing, coaching or administration or both
 - c) At what age, who for, and where?
- Can you share the details of your playing career?
- How would you describe the following people's reactions when they learnt you were involved in women's football?
 - a) Family, Mum, Dad, Partner, Children, Relatives and Siblings
 - b) Friends
 - c) People at your work
 - d) People in the football environment
- How would you describe your relationship with the following?
 - a) Club administrators
 - b) Coaches
 - c) Male players in the Club
 - d) Female players
- Can you describe any experiences that were memorable for you when you first started?
- What did/does your involvement mean to you – how important is /was it to you?
- What do you think the public perception is of women's football? – How did they describe it?

Being a woman

- How do you think women in football are treated in comparison to men?

- Do you/Did you experience any discomfort/conflict between being a football player/coach/administrator and being a woman?

Barriers

- Who encouraged you to become involved in football?
- Was there anybody who was against your involvement?
- In what areas do you think you were accepted?
- In what areas were you not taken seriously?
- Did you perceive any barriers or limitations to your involvement in football?
- If no, did other women experience any?
- If yes, how would you describe these barriers?
- When these barriers or restrictions were placed on you, how did you react?
- What about other women – how did they react?
- Did you experience any decisions that somebody made that you believed were unfair or unjust? If yes, who was this somebody? How did you react? Is your experience common to other women?
- What have you done to try and change things in women's football? What have other women done? What has worked? Why?
- What has not worked?
- When you reflect back – is there something that you can pinpoint that you learnt from playing soccer that was different to anything else you learnt but helped you in your later years whether at work or family or whatever?

General

- What do you see as the biggest challenges for women's football?
- What do you see as the greatest successes for women's football?
- How have things changed for women in football since -----?
- What are your strongest memories of that time-----?
- Is there anything you would like to talk about?

Appendix B – Information to Participants

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH



You are invited to participate

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “An Oral History of Women’s Soccer in Australia”. This project is being conducted by a student researcher, Greg Downes as part of a PhD study at Victoria University under the supervision of Dr Ian Syson from the Faculty of Arts and Human Development.

Project explanation

The research proposal aims to address via oral history the shortage of knowledge in relation to the history of women’s football (soccer) in Australia. In doing so this research will help to correct a major gendered imbalance in the study of Australian soccer, one which will benefit the development of the women’s game in Australia and assist in the future development of women’s sport in general.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to participate in one or two semi-structured 60–90-minute interviews (more if deemed necessary and agreed to by yourself) with Greg Downes that will be recorded and transcribed.

What will I gain from participating?

The use of oral history methodology will provide a unique opportunity for those women who pioneered the game, both on and off the field to bring educational information and societal context to the chronological record of the code’s development. More importantly, it will enable these women to share their stories.

How will the information I give be used?

The researcher will use your story as a building block in the larger narrative. A thesis and a book will be produced.

What are the potential risks of participating in this project?

The interviews could be a source of upset for some of the interviewees. The researchers are aware of this and will be sensitive to the possibility. Publication of some information could also prove distressing. This is why you will have absolute control over the level of confidentiality of the information you disclose. You will be offered the services of a psychologist, Professor Mark Andersen for counselling if you need this assistance at any stage. Contact details 03 99195413 and email mark.andersen@vu.edu.au

How will this project be conducted?

It will be an oral history and will include interviews with between 20 and 30 women, some of who have represented Australia, and will also include other players, administrators and referees. In addition male representatives who were major influences in the women’s game will also be interviewed.

Who is conducting the study?

Victoria University

Dr Ian Syson, 03 9919 2103; ian.syson@vu.edu.au

Greg Downes, 0417 653 198; gregory.downes1@live.vu.edu.au

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Chief Investigator listed above. If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Research Ethics and Biosafety Manager, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 or phone (03) 9919 4148.

Appendix C – Consent Form for Participants

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH



INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study to contribute to the history of women's football (soccer) in Australia through the use of oral history methodology. This process will involve a number of meetings in which a list of semi-structured questions will be asked, but will allow the participant ample freedom to tell their own stories and share their experiences. The study will provide a unique opportunity for the participants to tell their stories and in doing so to add context to the history of the women's code in Australia.

CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I, "[Click here & type participant's name]"
of "[Click here & type participant's suburb]"

Certify that I am at least 18 years old* and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study:

Oral History of women's football in Australia, being conducted at Victoria University by: Dr Ian Syson

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by Greg Downes, and that I freely consent to participation involving the below mentioned procedures:

- Initial introductory contact and meeting
- Participating in follow up meetings in which a number of semi structured questions will be asked, and the opportunity to share any experiences or stories that the participant feels free to provide
- Any additional meetings that may be required with the agreement of the participant
- A review of any transcription of the interview
- Final approval of the use of any transcribed material

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

I consent to the information I provide being held in perpetuity.

Signed:

Date:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher or Dr Ian Syson 03 9919 2106.

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Research Ethics and Biosafety Manager, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 or phone (03) 9919 4148.

[*please note: Where the participant/s are aged under 18, separate parental consent is required; where the participant/s are unable to answer for themselves due to mental illness or disability, parental or guardian consent may be required.]